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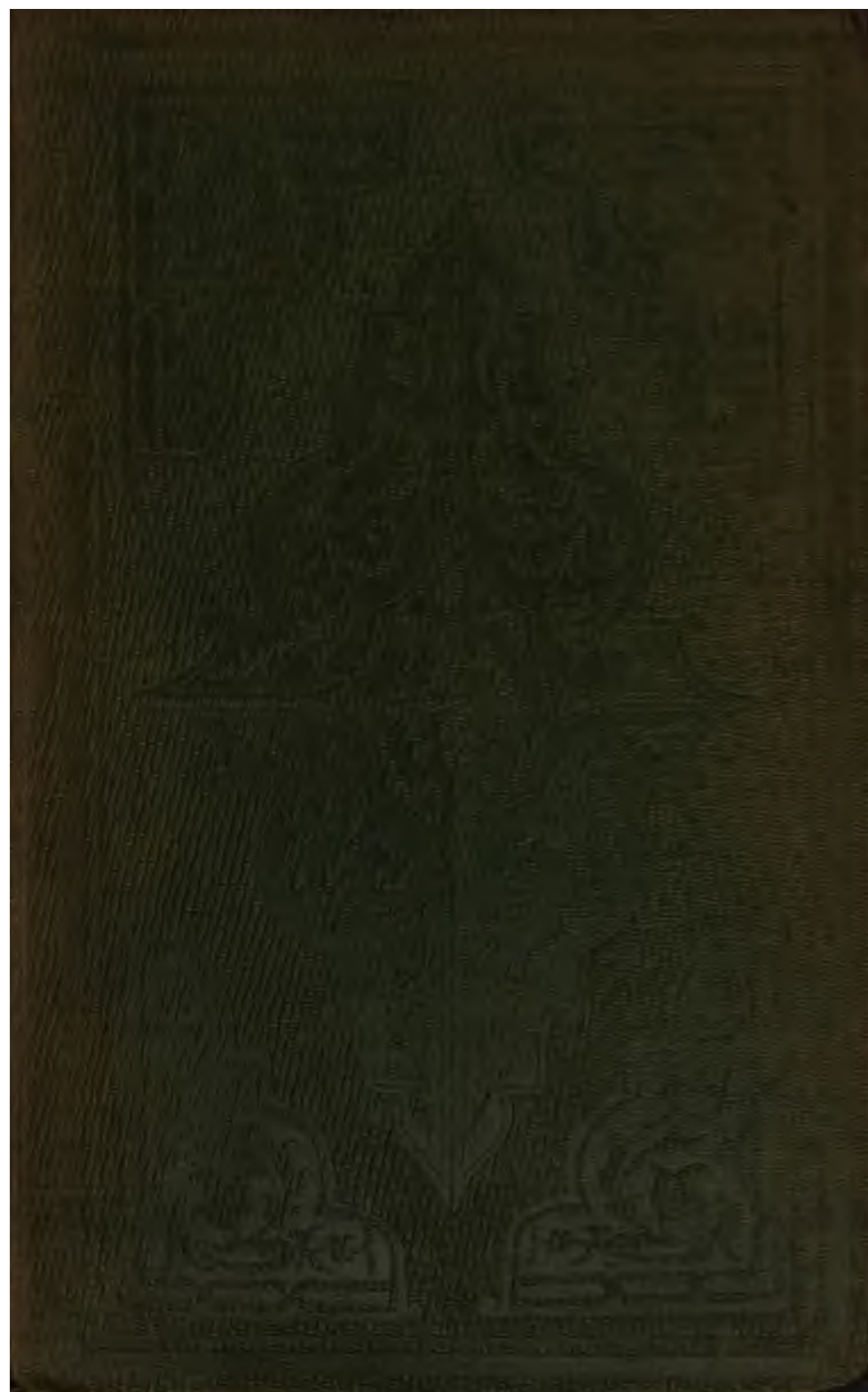
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BETTY WESTMINSTER;
OR,
THE WORSHIP OF WEALTH.

A NOVEL

BY

WILLIAM PLATT, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

"MOTHERS AND SONS," "TALES OF THE MOUNTAINS," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
T. C. NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1859.

249. x. 466.



BETTY WESTMINSTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOME.

THE Westminsters, of Hillborough ?

And what of them ?

Open the map of merry England, obliging reader, please, and show us the humblest hamlet anywhere without its home-history, its local memorabilia of weal or woe, its treasured chronicles of dazzling or dark deeds done by itself at one time or another, its famous or its infamous to boast of or to blush for to the end of time ; yes, and, if read aright, peradventure to point a moral or adorn a tale with.

Well, the map open :—somewhere about midway among the most western of the south-western counties, pleasantly enough situated in a rich, well-watered and well-wooded land, stands Hillborough, let us call it—the scene of the principal events I am now going to narrate, if you will, for your amusement.

A very old town is Hillborough ; a very handsome old town, too, as any in its shire ; of most venerable antiquity—so venerable, goodness forbid I should be profane enough to put finger of mine, otherwise than with due knowledge and the profoundest respect, on any of its hoary honors : but no harm can be done in saying, that its people are exceedingly proud of it ; that it boasts of three fine old churches in and near it, of the early English schools, full of rare relics, and rich memories ; a most legitimate Town Hall on six stout wooden legs ; a present worshipful Mayor, who, like his worshipful predecessors, would not have a

brick or stone removed to save his office ; an ivy-mantled free grammar school, of high renown—ask Oxford and Cambridge, then ; its winding river, watering its pleasant meadows ; a bold, broad High Street and Market Place, should sit, to be seen in perfection, on Saturdays, for their photographs ; a climate unrivalled, say the statistics ; and a little township and fellow-brethren, to crown all, round and about, second to none, by all accounts, past or present, for those best of all Christian gifts—make Christian neighbours.

Besides its High Street, Hillborough, like most other old towns of its class, sends off from its main trunk the customary complement of cross roads and crooked lanes, leading this way and that, again to be crossed and intersected by others, having, for their chief end, short cuts to the more open country, west or southward, or to the various wharfs along the water-side, doing generally at this day a brisk canal-trade in

wools, and corn, and hides, but which, times back, made the trade of Hillborough the deserved pride and praise of the west-districts.

It was precisely in these times-back palmy days, when industry was pretty sure of its reward, when money really did make money, and there was little need to advertise for safe investments, that had you been walking arm-in-arm, curious reader, with a Hillborough friend, up its High Street, to see the lions, probably he or she would have paused a moment, just after clearing the Town Hall, and, pointing to a large, dark, dingy, red-brick-built, peaked-roof, heavy-gabled house, of three stories, standing back within its high rusty iron palings some six strides from the pavement, told you that there, within that paintless door and dirt and dust-stained lattice-windows, the abode, seemingly, of neglect and wretchedness, lived and thrived apace Geoffrey Westminster,

brewer, banker, cornfactor, wool dealer, &c., &c., &c., the richest man in all ——shire.

It is with those money-making days of the early Hillborough Westminsters that our story has now first to do ; and we need go no further back, for our purpose, than old Geoffry, or Daddy Westminster, as he was commonly called, into whose hands, at his father's death, fell a ready-made fortune, which might well have allowed him, had he been so minded, to fall back into his easy chair, and leave the future safe enough in son Tim's hands.

But no ; though Daddy loved his old, straight-backed leather chair, and weak glass of whisky-toddy of an evening for an hour before bed, as did his father and grandfather before him, when the day's work was done, and would now and then, for a treat—come a rich haul—blow a cloud content enough with a neighbour, at that good man's cost,—no Westminster would have been Daddy, had he, while the use of head

and hands lasted him, and gold was in the case, given to any other on earth the work to do which he could do himself. Such had been the rule and practice of his race, and rule and practice with Daddy were the same things as the breath he breathed, or Gospel-warrant.

Unlike his ancestors, to one only of whom Providence had thought fit ever to grant a heir-male till little Geoffry was born, Daddy's own quiver was tolerably well filled. Three children, viz., Timothy, Elizabeth, and Andrew Gilbert, were the fruits of his first marriage with Dorothy Elizabeth, eldest daughter of one Gerard Wilcox, a rich woolstapler of Hillborough; and Lucretia, of his second nuptial union with Mary, youngest daughter of Major Lowndes, who, dying in India, and deeply mortgaged to him, Geoffry, left his family, then living in a pretty cottage *ornée* of his, Geoffry's, about a mile across the meadows from Hillborough, almost unprovided for.

Geoffry was well-favoured enough, handsome, some called him, when gold was not in quest, and had oft times cast side looks towards the pew in which sat Mary of a Sunday; and, though he knew she would not have a shilling, thought more of her a great deal than the Rev. Mr. Plover would have sanctioned, had he known it. And wide enough did his Reverence open his eyes, when, little more than twelve months after the major's death, rumour brought him the intelligence, for a fact, that Geoffry Westminster had not only paid off out of his own purse all the major's Hillborough debts, but that *the first time of asking* between Geoffry Westminster and Mary Lowndes, spinster, of that parish, was to take place at the Old Church, God willing, next Sunday. It did take place, no *cause or just impediment* then and there appearing to prevent it; and Geoffry led home his lovely wife—his “true lady,” as he used to call her,—all the prouder of her, perhaps,

miser as he was, because she did not bring him a sixpence.

Mary was truly what he called her, *a lady*. She was more, she was a thorough Christian woman, and a thorough good wife, and mother to his children, and mistress of his house, and friend and neighbour, loved by all who knew her. Her life was one of duties fulfilled. She shaped herself to those she had to do, and never tired of them. In and about them, she found her happiness—and Geoffry saw no woman to equal Mary Westminster.

With reason, speculations were rife when Geoffry took home his *lady-wife* — where was her heart ?

Geoffry knew where it was—where he would have it for the present—it was safe enough for him there—he relied on its goodness—yes, and on another fond hope.

He was right : little Lucretia made her appearance, and Geoffrey clapped his hands. Mr. Plover almost cried with joy ; and

nobody ever asked any more, where was Mary's heart ?

But it was not all to be as Geoffry wished. Ere Lucretia, the image of her mother, was ten years old—after but a fortnight's illness from anxiety and over-fatigue, while watching for six successive bitter winter nights by her sick-bed side—Mary fell a victim to her love ; and Geoffry was made to feel a loss, not all his gold could ever recompense him for.

It was a dark day for Geoffry which saw Mary laid in her grave ; and many, many more followed it before the sun shone at all into his soul again. But Geoffry was a father as well as a husband. He was a Westminster, moreover ; and, “ though it had pleased Heaven to smite him—his duty—what was that ? To provide for his house as he ought :” and, shaking off the icy-hand from his heart, he got about and bestirred himself again ; and, going to the mason's, had a beautiful marble tablet erected to

Mary's memory over his own pew, for which Timothy and Mr. Plover wrote the epitaph; and never did marble monument record praises better merited. With what other thoughts than those which, years back, would sometimes take Geoffry's eyes from off his prayer-book to the sweet pensive face, intent on its Sabbath duties, opposite him, now raised, he them, full of tears, to her breathless clay? Then, his cheeks would tingle when the minister gently re-proved him for divided worship—for he felt it must be to him that his censures were addressed. Now, thunder as he might, he heard them not; but, fixing his gaze on that loved face, saw and heard sights and sounds, oh, to him how more heavenward far, how unutterably more assuring, how immeasurably more convincing and consoling, than human tongue and teaching had ever told him of!

And from that day till the last Sunday was his on earth, unless illness laid him on

his back, never had the Rev. Mr. Plover the pain to number Geoffry Westminster among his absentees from church.

Left a widower, and now more than ever to his gold, Geoffry sought solace where, for him, it was alone to be found. He would carry out the rule and practice of his house, and provide for that house as it behoved a Westminster to do.

Timothy, his first born, was the counterpart of himself, and in Tim's hands the credit of the house might have been very safely entrusted ; but this would have been contrary to all precedent, and Daddy would hold the reins till his fingers could no longer clutch them ; and then son Tim should take them, and welcome ; and, after him, brother Andrew Gilbert, if Tim died heirless ; but not a penny should either touch till he himself was in his coffin. Daddy went on *providing* ; Tim and Andrew doing his behests without a murmur, as good and dutiful children ought.

Both were alike misers in their hearts—would haggle over Nanny Lynch's red-herrings for half-an-hour at the door, to save a halfpenny. But Tim was ever most after Daddy's own heart—money to make—of all his children. True, no one could ever say of Andrew, any more than of Tim, that he had ever been caught spending an idle shilling, or doing an act of charity known to no one. Therein he and Tim could meet on even ground. Nay, of the two, come to that, Nanny had more trouble a deal with Andrew than his brother. Still, though wide-awake enough at a bargain, when it came before him, a true chip of the old block as Daddy well could wish for, yet, somehow, the grand strokes by which great fortunes are made, as if by magic, seemed above his mark; and, though the gossips used to say, when the boys were in jackets and pinafores,—“it was easy to see which Geoffry favoured more;” those who knew Daddy best, knew also how much Daddy

loved his gold ; and, so loving it, what a comfort it was to him to think, " that God had given him such a lad as Tim to take his wealth !"

Andrew's fault—and Daddy knew it well—was indolence, and a disposition to procrastinate. While about it, his eyes would gloat over a bargain, and his fingers itch to clutch the saved penny as much as any of them ; but he was apt to " miss of his chances," which Tim never did, and this gave Tim considerable advantages over him. Daddy never quite forgave a chance missed, nor would a dozen prizes reconcile Daddy for one blank—that blank laid to the charge of sloth or indecision.

Andrew's nature was just as miserly as Timothy's ; in mere trifles, perhaps, more so, but he shrunk from the trouble of great efforts. Now and then, when spurred up by Daddy's taunts, he would make a bold stroke, and try and outdo Tim ; when Tim, put on his mettle, would set to work, and,

bringing his fruits home, throw sister Betty into such a fit of laughing, that poor Andrew was glad to hide his diminished head, and go seek solace from Lucretia. Tim's evidently was the master-head and hand, and the master will to set and to keep them going. Andrew could will and work also, the fit on him, and cast up his gains quite as greedily as Tim; but there was a soft place somewhere in his heart, long ago found out and fostered by Lucretia; and Daddy knew of it, too, and, crossing his hands in his lap, and regarding them from under his pent-house brow, would heave a sigh as he thought of their mother; and then for awhile sister Betty seemed to be forgotten, and only his sweet, blue-eyed, fair-haired Lu to reign in his love; and then he would coax her to his side, and, smoothing down her front hair with both hands, touch her forehead with his lips, and be lost in thought for a moment; till, catching Betty's searching gaze fixed on

them, or Tim breaking in with some business matters, he would push her away from him; and, Mammon regaining its ascendancy, oh, how Betty's eye, would glare again with triumph, to note the one all-powerful idol alone that Daddy worshipped from his soul!

And Betty worshipped it, too, as did brothers Tim and Andrew, no less than Daddy; though—and many a sharp look and word got poor Lucretia for it—in a different way to any of them went Andrew about his work. All Tim's example and Betty's urgings, though they might spur him up for a little, never got him long out of his pace; and Daddy might fret, and fume, and storm, and threaten, it was all one—he must go his own way, though Daddy cut him off with a shilling for it. How it might have been with him, without Lucretia's loving heart to go to for counsel and comfort, there is no knowing; but certainly, as it was, he lacked Tim's steady strength, and purpose, and perseverance. Small profits,

surely made, engrossed him most, for they cost him least exertion. He would chuckle far more over his twopence wrung out of Nanny's herring-basket, spite of Lucretia's long face, than would Tim and Betty at the thought of the rich freight had just been towed alongside wharf. Moreover, Andrew was given to a little self-indulgence. Bring the day what it might, he would have his evening hours of relaxation ; and, the best of it was, so would Lucretia if she could. Both loved the close of day, for then Betty's eyes were not so on them, and they felt freer to breathe, and think, and talk, and enjoy their being. And then, though with no more soul for music in him than a post, he would get away with Lu into the garden, and make her sing over and over to him his favourite songs—and sweetly she sung them ; or, standing arm-in-arm at the wicket-gate as the sun went down, would listen, dreamily, to the lulling murmur of the old town, hieing calmly homeward from its labours ; the

happy shouts of the boys and girls at their games, school done, and nature paramount, mingled with the dulcet lowings of the milch cows, no less eager for their homes, too, and think those the happiest moments of his life.

But it was only because the day was over, and the day's work done, that Andrew so regaled himself. He had earned his evening, and the sweet songs and pleasant chats over, his supper, too ; and, if matters had gone all right in the counting-house, an extra nice dish, mayhap, and, not impossible, a glass of gooseberry wine out of Betty's bin, or a cup of draught-cider.

Not but that Andrew would have wanted his supper all the same, whether he had earned it or not ; and, when he was cheapening Nanny's herrings of a morning, was licking his lips—come what would—at the thought of, “ how nice they would be, done, as no one could do them better, by old Molly, with a bit of lard and bread crumbs, for their supper.”

Tim liked red-herrings to the full as much as Andrew, but would have gone without food all day, rather than have let slip a chance of turning a sixpence to account. Indeed, it was astonishing, considering the little he ate and drank, to see how Tim contrived to keep any flesh on his bones ; yet, Tim got fat, while Andrew, do all old Molly could, lived and died, with all his indulgencies, lank and lean as a scarecrow.

How was this? 'Twas a curious physiological fact, this scarecrow leanness of Andrew's, and Tim's fat. Tim, of a bloodless, parchment complexion, like his father, and, like him, of a grasping, restless, and exacting temper, got fat ; Andrew was, in the main, easy and indulgent, of florid skin, fresh, open face, and auburn hair, and his clothes hung about him as if thrown on a skeleton. By all rule it ought to have gone the other way ; but so it was, which seems to prove there can be no rule about it.

And this is confirmed by the two half-

sisters. They are not going to sit for their portraits just at present, as they will better come out as we go on by-and-bye ; but, like the brothers, Elizabeth and Lucretia set the given rules at nought. With a mind never at rest, night or day, with eyes and ears ever hard at work on gain, with a temper, in comparison with which Daddy and Tim's were sweetest milk of human kindness, with a heart iron-hard, and unimpulsive but to hoarding, Betty, like Tim, was fat and hearty as fat heart could be, throwing Lucretia, as she sat beside her, quite into the shade. Poor Lu had no chance, as far as weight went, by her side, unless may be put into the scale that full measure of the great heart and understanding which fell to her fair share over and above Betty's, and which ought to go for something. Then, with all its helps, Betty's scale kicked the beam most palpably. But, for all that, for all the head and heart, a fairy thing, beside Elizabeth, grew up

Lucretia ; and Daddy, as he looked at them both, best knew his own thoughts. They may just be guessed at, for with him they were natural enough :—Daddy was a true Westminster, cut clean out of the one old, hard block ; so was Betty, every inch of her ; —Lucretia, what was she ?—“ Her sweet mother over again—of fine and finished mould—his lady daughter—a fair, and, after Betty, fragile form to look upon—a sweet, gentle, generous girl, fit wife for a lord some day ;—but no—no a Westminster—not bone and blood of his—no Westminster—no, no.”

With all his love for the mother, and it was no little, there is small need to ask, to which inclined Daddy’s heart more at those moments—to the Lowndes’, or the Westminster’s ?

CHAPTER II

RATHER A TRAGIC ONE.

BETTY had passed the age of doubtful spinsterhood, and Lucretia was eighteen. No one would have taken them for even half-sisters. Two greater contrasts never owned the same father. Lady, perfect lady, was stamped on Lucretia—vulgarity on Betty. Nevertheless, they might have agreed well enough, nay, with such a heart as Lucretia's, loved each other dearly, but for the occasional "lady-mother-sick fits" of Daddy, as Betty called them, which, absorbing him for a while now and then, raised Betty's hatred and jealousy to such a pitch at last,

that, had she had a spirit like her own to deal with, would have made Daddy's quiet house sometimes insufferable to live in.

That Lucretia was beautiful, and good as she was lovely, and had reigned superior to all other thoughts in her mother's heart from the cradle, Betty might have got over, torment her often as the thought did; and her glass might not have made her near so coarse and ugly in her own eyes as she looked in other peoples—moreover, she was very vain, and “hated your gentility cordially;” but she could not and would not stomach Daddy's mother-preferences; those raised her envy and malice, and it was all Tim could do at such times to keep down her zealous rage, and prevent some terrible outbreak, should it come to Daddy's ears.

Mollified a little by Tim, the storm would pass over for a time, but it was long before the angry elements were at peace again; and then at any moment to be let loose afresh with redoubled fury; till it became so

serious, Tim passed sleepless nights, racking his brain how best to do away with it all—do away with it in the only way seemed feasible to Tim—by finding a fitting husband for Lucretia.

“There was their managing clerk over the way, James Hoxton, would make her a good match; but, law! what good were white hands like hers to help Jemmy at a pinch? Then, Roger Jolliffe, the home traveller, would jump at such a chance;—or, who knew—old Woodford himself, the doctor, come down with a thousand or so, might make her Mrs. W.? Anyhow, Tim must get her a husband; and, only let him drop on one to suit, and catch him standing any nonsense.”

Old Woodford, as they called him, was unquestionably, though some twenty years her senior and a widower, the favoured one of the three, whom—must she—Lucretia would have chosen; for, besides being her own dear doctor, to whom she owed her

life, and the health she then enjoyed, he was a gentleman, and a scholar, and had a kind and feeling heart, and did a great deal of *gratis-good* in his way, and had a snug home of his own, and deserved a good wife, and could appreciate one when he had got her; but she had her own reasons, when Tim came to sound her about him, for saying nothing, so that Tim was forced to go back to Betty little wiser than he went.

"Was it likely she had any one else in her head? Such a thought had never entered his, Tim's."

"Might be — Betty had her doubts, though."

Tim winked, and figgeted in his chair.

"Betty could guess."

"No?—Who?"

"The nephew, not unlikely."

"What? Daddy stand that? A red-coat? No—will he?—I know better."

"So do I, and so I made bold to tell her."

"What did she say?"

"Nothing."

"Like her. Shall she? We'll see. Tell Daddy that"—and Tim grinned at the thought—"Daddy stand that? No—he'd follow her to the grave first."

Andrew's entrance put a stop to the conversation.

And soon a little characteristic incident occurred to raise the storm fiercer than ever again, attended, too, with rather tragic consequences.

Geoffry Westminster had his fixed rules and rigid ones by which his house was governed. They were the rules of his ancestors, and no one ever dreamt of disputing, far less of disobeying them. At Mary's death the domestic management devolved on Betty; and, if there could be a substitute for the mother, certainly Geoffry might hope for it, as far as strict care and economy went, in his elder daughter; and, though his heart sunk rather when at first he made over the keys to her, it was not that he

feared for a penny's risk from her custody of them, but only lest, perhaps, in her over-zeal she should make him think sometimes more than beseemed him of a loss, which, he never heard the gingling of those keys, but he felt deeper and deeper the heavy sadness of.

But duty, with Daddy, outweighed all other considerations; and daughter Betty was deserveing, and should have the government over his household. From that day, Daddy never interfered with it. Betty's rule was supreme. It might be a little arbitrary sometimes; but, on the whole, it worked well for Daddy; and, what worked well for him, Daddy was quite content should work on, for them all.

As in all strict governments, so the Westminsterian licences were very few—the prohibitions many and absolute. Among the forbidden things of Geoffrey's household—the ever giving away at the back-door—at the front there was no fear of it,—either

food, or raiment, or coin, or comforts of any kind, stood first upon the list. Nothing short of Daddy's deep displeasure, which was no joke, and daughter Betty's black looks for a month, no less formidable, followed the slightest infringement of this rule. Geoffry Westminster might have had other ways, known only to himself, of helping the poor and needy—"charity hopeth all things,"—but when, or what, Geoffry ever gave, knowingly, except to the rates, or an odd copper now and then to a street-boy for sweeping his door-way after snow, or running of an errand, the chronicles make no mention of. Still, "charity hopeth all things;" and, though nobody remembers, seemingly, ever to have witnessed by any chance basket or basin going to, or coming from, Daddy's kitchen, let us trust, that Daddy knew of other surer ways of doing good, and, so knowing, also did adopt them.

"Beggars never troubled him," used Geoffry to say, while Betty's eyes kindled at

the compliment ; and Molly echoed her appreciation in the little shrill sharp chuckle peculiar to her.

So, Geoffry doubled the girls pocket money without fear. He had a pride in that—"he would never they should be without a guinea in their purses."

What Betty did with her's, Betty's lamb's-wool stocking up in her bed room somewhere knew best. Where Lucretia's all went was a puzzle for a long time even to Betty, whose keen eye few things escaped that she had a mind to ferret out. It all went, and quickly, too, somehow, that was certain ; and Tim was put on the scent ; then Molly ; but, somehow, Lucretia contrived to cheat them all, and took no blame to herself for it either.

True, a new pair of gloves too many, or a fresh pair of strings to her bonnet, "before the others were hardly soiled," Betty said, 'told a queer tale ;' or more little books and Christian tracts by half than Tim could

see the good of ; and drawings, and pencils, and paints, and paint-brushes, her chief delight ; and pens and papers, and worsted-works, than Molly, either, might account for it. “ But these were not enough of themselves,” said Tim, biting his words, “ to leave her the beggar she often was,”—little Tim dreamed of the infant Gainsborough he had for a sister,—“ coming running to Andrew, continually, wheedling him out of his money—would he, if he were Andrew ?”

Well, Lucretia was getting well again after the measles. They had been quite a little fortune in Hillborough and about to Dr. Woodford, had those measles ; and at one time Daddy did really think he was going to lose her. But skill prevailed, and the lilies and pale roses blended were beginning to reward his care.

Molly could do wonders, but she could not be everywhere at once ; and Phœbe Birch, who usually came to help a bit of a Saturday, was called in, and posted by the sick bed-side. Phœbe had a kindish heart,

left to herself, and happy enough was Lucretia when Molly's turn to watch was over, and Phœbe Birch relieved her.

Daddy would come up sometimes, too, and sit for five minutes or so on the bed-foot, and look at Phœbe and her needles, and then at the dimmed blue eyes smiling their sweetest thanks on him for his goodness; and a cloud would pass for an instant over his face,—when Phœbe would bustle about, and declare, “she was getting quite well again, dear child!” and, then, Daddy would rub his hands—look at his watch—and, taking a finger between his, call her a good girl;—and, rejoining Betty—make her count up the doctor's visits, and bid her “mind Phœbe returned all the empty bottles.”

Daddy hated of all things a doctor in the house, he could not tie him down by any sure rule. The sight of the medicine-boy put him out all day. Though that boy had come, with healing in his hands, to his door, night and day for weeks, while one o

the other of them lay sick on their fevered beds—no, never had Geoffry found it in his heart so much as to reward him with a penny. As he now crossed the passage to his own room, the street-door bell rang. Geoffry answered it himself. It was another bottle for Miss Lucretia. Daddy frowned as he took it from the boy.

Sam was slipping off, when a “humph” from Daddy brought their eyes in contact.

It was the first time Daddy had ever looked the boy attentively in the face. It was now pale with fatigue and weakness, and Sam had yet a long round to go.

“Humph! Time a’most you were home and a-bed, young master?”

Sam touched his cap, and “hoped Miss Lucretia was getting better?”

“Humph!”—and Daddy’s right hand left the door-knob and went into his breeches pocket. Sam’s cheeks tingled for a moment.

“Pooh—nonsense,” cried Betty, coming to the rescue!—“that’s the way half of ’em

are ruined, and come to the workhouse. Go round, Sam, there's a good boy, and tell Molly to give you a slice of bread and treacle, if she's got any."

But Daddy's heart smote him; and, laying wait for Sam, as he came out, he pushed a sixpence, unseen by Betty, into his hand; and, going up to the sick room with the fresh bottle, kissed his sleeping girl's forehead; and then went to his own rest—happier than he had ever felt since her mother's death.

It was the only act of extravagance, that sixpence, when Tim heard of it afterwards, that he ever laid at Daddy's door, and mention is made of it for that very reason. Daddy slept well on it, and rose next day, "he said, never feeling better."

And rapidly Lucretia now got round and about again, so that Daddy only took in one more bottle; and, "he must say, Dr. Woodford honestly earned his bread if ever man did."

The worst of the measles is, it leaves

such an appetite! There is hardly any satisfying it. It was, as Betty said, "quite fearful, quite unnatural!"

So, in some sort, to bring it under Lucretia must leave off the bitters, and take more exercise. "A walk—weather permitting—mornings and afternoons, with his Sophy," advised the doctor, "would do her more good than all his tonics."

Exactly Daddy's opinion — precisely Betty's. Andrew "quite agreed, too."

Tim had "never taken a drop of physic since he had had the scarlet fever; was always out and about—and see."

"If they thought so, Lucretia would try."

"So she should—the very next day," Daddy settled it.

Strange! they had not taken their walks together a week—though Sophy always came home hungry as a hunter—when all of a sudden Lucretia's appetite was gone entirely.

This was more than Daddy had bargained

for, and fidgetted him rather ; especially as she declared, she felt quite well, and the colour came brighter every day into her cheeks. Still, her plate at dinner stood before her almost untouched, though never had they known her in higher spirits.

The doctor counselled, “ patience, and trusting to nature. It mattered nothing *when* she ate. If the appetite did not come at one time, it would at another. Unlike many of his professional brethren, he had the greatest faith in *nature*.”

So had Betty. “ Only see how well and plump and handsome her dear father was on toast and water ?”

“ Yes, and not a drop of beer or spirits had ever his,” Tim’s, “ lips tasted, that he knew of, since his cradle—and look.”

Betty looked up affectionately, first at Tim, then with a shrug at Andrew—enough to say, “ you boast of as much if you can.”

Andrew winced a bit—he always did under Betty’s lash ; but, recovering himself,

and encouraged by the doctor's presence—

“ Well,” said he, “ nature's nature.”

“ That's it—clear enough, Andrew.”

“ I mean, there's no rule—that is—what's one man's meat”——

“ Yes, yes—to another's no treat—that's it. So, I say—eh, Miss Westminster—I say,” laughed the doctor, “ if she can't eat up her pudding in time—clear away, Molly, eh? Or, no—wait a moment—as she's been a good girl—so she has—with her physic—suppose we, eh, let her take up her pudding with her, and eat it all by herself in Coventry, just to punish her a bit, eh, for her daintiness? Then, if that don't do—'gad, there's nothing for it, that I see,” with a look at Daddy, “ but to throw in another course more tonics.”

Daddy winked and giggled ; while Betty, with her eyes fixed on her needle, plied away resolutely at the huckaback towel she was hemming ; nevertheless, having an ear open for every word that was spoken, and a

side glance at Tim, too, biting his thumbnail to the quick in a chair opposite.

The house-work had got back sadly during the fever—Molly “couldn’t fetch it up at all, toil her hands off from morning till night. Let Phœbe come in for a little, might she?”

“Yes, Betty had no objection—she never knew such a small eater. And Phœbe had a sick boy at home, hadn’t she?—her boy Dicky?”

“Yes, truth—just up from the fever, also.”

“Will be wanting more victuals, be sure?”

“Not much of that Phœbe could spare, with five of them, that was true.”

“Anyhow, a job would help her on a bit, wouldn’t it?”

So, Phœbe came: first two days a-week, then every other day as soon as she could leave Dicky. “He was getting quite well and hearty again, thank God! and now, only let her earn enough to buy him a bit

of meat every day, if she could, and she wouldn't mind if she worked her fingers off."

"Poor Dicky," sighed Lucretia, unaware that Betty was behind her—"he shall have some of my meat, then, every day for his dinner, if I starve for it."

"Oh!" said Betty to herself, "he shall, shall he?" and, closetting herself with Tim,—out went Sophy Woodford and Lucretia, unsuspecting, for their daily walks as usual, but still with the same result—Sophy ready to eat her fingers always with hunger, while Lucretia, spite of the fresh roses, was doing little more at table than playing with her knife and fork.

But as long as—in obedience to the doctor's orders—the plates went up full, and came down empty, Daddy thought no harm could be done; and, as Betty seemed satisfied, and there was no further talk of the tonics, he troubled no more about it. "She might live on air, if she could, if it didn't bring him in a doctor's bill."

Things went on much as usual; when one evening, just as Phoebe, with her apron doubled up in a bunch before her, had wished Miss Lucretia good night, and, with the door-knob in her hand, was gently closing it after her, up ran Betty as fast as legs could carry her, two stairs at once, and, planting herself with arms a-kimbo on the landing, fixed her two deep, grey, glaring eyes upon her, as though she would pierce her through; and, peremptorily demanding, "what she had there?" pointing to the apron—made it evident she had no sort of intention she should move a step one way or the other till she had told her.

Phoebe was staggered; but, though dumb-struck for a moment, exhibited no sign of fear.

Betty kept her savage gaze rivetted on her like a serpent.

Phoebe thought of Miss Lucretia, and,

feeling the blood rush to her face, became confused.

Betty made a move forward, and, pulling the apron spitefully with her finger and thumb — “What’s there — there?” she hissed ; “answer me that !”

This brought out Lucretia to the rescue.

Betty’s face, as their eyes met, was terrible to behold. “There—there—what’s there, I say?” she cried, livid with rage, and stamping the ground—“Do you hear.”

“Show her,” said Lucretia, calmly.

This was too much.

“Show her? Yes, yes—I’ll show her,” gasped Betty, with the froth on her lip—“There !” and, striking Phoebe’s wrist that supported the apron a sharp blow, down it went, scattering the meat and pudding at Betty’s feet.

“For shame, Elizabeth !” said Lucretia, crimsoning. “I may do, may I not, what I please with my own? Cruel of you !” and, stooping on one knee, she picked up the

broken fragments ; while Phœbe, standing stock-still, ventured not a word, fearing what might follow if she angered Betty further ; and having gathered them together—" There," added Lucretia with a sweet smile, as she dropped them again into the open apron—" there—they'll be none the worse for Dicky, will they—warm them up again ?"

Phœbe made a movement towards the stairs.

" Go—shall she ?" gasped Betty, glaring first on the one, then on the other, like a tigress " Go—go ? Yes, we'll see that—let her--ha, ha, ha !—that's how it is my little lady has lost her appetite—ha, ha, ha !"—and, with a sudden snatch tearing the apron from its strings, down again went poor Dicky's next days's dinner, strewed about in all directions.

Lucretia was no coward. This put her blood up, as Phœbe, pale and trembling, fell to crying.

"Huzzy!" cried Betty, catching her savagely by the wrist, and pushing her back; "I'll teach you which is mistress."

"For shame—for shame—cruel, wicked of you!" cried Lucretia, imploringly—"you shan't hurt her—you shan't—you shan't!" and, interposing herself between them, for a moment Betty, surprised at such assurance, paused for breath, and then to take measure of her little lady—when, apparently resolved, she flew, mad with passion, at her sister. Up went Lucretia's right arm, while with the left she kept tight hold of Phoebe's hand, to save herself from falling; at which juncture Betty's vengeful face met it half way, and, receiving a sharp blow, out spurted the blood in gushes from her nose, and, stunned with the shock, and losing her balance, she fell heavily to the floor.

Terrified, Lucretia ran into her room for some water; but the jug was empty, and the hartshorn-bottle dried up. Trembling with fright and agitation, she rushed from

chamber to chamber, while Phœbe was doing her anxious best to bring her to again.

Soon the life-tide came back—Betty was not one for fainting-fits; and, before Lucretia could get back, she had disengaged herself from Phœbe's arms, and, without saying a word, re-adjusted her hair and dress; when, calm as a swelling torrent before it bursts its bounds, descending to the parlour, she presented herself before Daddy and Tim, covered with blood as she was; while Lucretia, in the solitude of her own room, was left to interpret her parting glance as she thought fit.

Daddy turned white as a sheet, then crimson, then again white, and sat staring as one bewildered.

Tim bit his nails deeper and deeper, till his handkerchief was spotted all over.

It was late before father, son, and daughter separated that night, after Betty had told her tale.

One thing was settled, and Daddy swore

it—"Phœbe should never set foot in the house again."

At first, Daddy would go up himself to Lucretia; but Tim held him back. "In his anger he might have another fit—might break a blood vessel;—better wait till to-morrow morning."

"Much," agreed Betty. "Her own conscience will prick enough."

"Disobedience must, and should, be punished. Duplicity was what Daddy hated above all things. Lucky it was no worse—that the doctor was not wanted. But he would punish her as sure as she was his daughter. He would have no tricks of that sort, no blinding him. What did Dicky want with meat, when he was ill? Meat was n't good, so much of it, for children. They had always pudding before meat when he was a boy, and meat never more than three times a week, and not always that. Meat—no, it wasn't for Dicky—it was for that Jem, his idle, good-for-nothing father—it

wasn't for Dicky. He'd have no more hangers on. That's just how it was Nat Taggert's house was robbed, encouraging beggars." And Daddy, furiously ringing the bell for Molly, went to his rest to dream of all sorts of horrors ; while poor Phœbe gained her house, half-broken-hearted—not for herself or Dicky, but thinking of the terrible storm that was brewing for poor dear Miss Lucretia.

As may be supposed, this affair of the broken victuals and the bloody nose set the seal to Betty's rooted hatred of her sister. As for Lucretia, she had forgiven Betty from her heart before she lay her head on her pillow that night ; and next morning would have kissed, and shaken hands, if she might, and forgotten all about it.

But Betty had no such present intention ; and, before Lucretia was well awake, up came Molly, with her apron to her eye, and a message from master, to say—" Miss Lucretia was to breakfast in her own room

that morning, and, in short, not show her face, till it pleased Miss Betty to let her do so."

Betty saw her opportunity now, and, generously throwing herself at Daddy's knees after dinner, worked so on him, that, at length, leave was given her to go up to the rebellious one, and, if she found her repentant, to bring her down to supper; and, then, after it, he, Daddy, would have some serious talk with her before he went to bed. "But, mark him!—if anything of the sort ever occurred again, by the souls of his ancestors! he would pack her off, and never leave her a shilling."

"Best get her married, and out," muttered Tim, looking up from his thumb-nail; "no peace else in the house ever."

Daddy had not thought of that, evidently.

"Eh, what—married?—child like that married, son Tim?"

Tim repeated his reasons—"Never any peace in the house else."

"Child like that?"

"Eighteen, and past."

Evidently Daddy had not given that a thought either, and sat twiddling his thumbs and musingly shaking his knees, in consequence.

"Such a temper," went on Tim.

"A great pity!" sighed Betty; "might be so happy."

"Married—married—married," grumbled Daddy.

"That might mend it, mightn't it?" said Tim; and, lowering his voice, "I think I know somebody, too."

"Eh, what—somebody—who—what?" caught up Daddy, darting a sharp, suspicious look, first at one, then at the other.

Tim was not lavish of speech, he usually came to the point at once.

"Eh—somebody—what do you mean?" repeated Geoffry, heightening the key.

"What I mean is," replied Tim, leaving his thumb, and looking Daddy full in the

face, "is, that I think I know somebody would make her a good husband, and keep a tight hand over her, too."

"Tight hand — tight hand," echoed Daddy, mechanically, as his eyes rested on a small crayon drawing of her mother over the mantel-shelf.

"Tight, or tender," put in Betty, "teach her, you mean, Tim, what's best for her happiness, poor child?"

"That's it," said Tim.

"Happiness—happiness," sighed Daddy still with his gaze on the portrait.

"If *he* couldn't give it her," said Tim, "I'm wrong."

"Give it her? Eh—who—happiness—who?"

Tim turned towards the window, and, pointing to the "Old Bank" on the other side of the road—"James Hoxton, sir."

"James Hoxton, son Tim?" exclaimed Daddy, in a tone that made Betty start; 'my clerk, James Hoxton?'

"Yes, sir."

Tim knew his father well. Circumlocute or prevaricate, and he would have had no power over him.

"Brave boy !" cried Daddy, with a curious giggle peculiar to him when diverted ; " and what has James got, to keep a wife with ?"

"Two hundred a year, clear, sir, from your house ; your kind promise of promotion"—

"Yes, Tim, and I'll keep it."

"Of promotion, sir, for faithful services ; and his mother's jointure of seven thousand about, must fall in soon."

"That all ?—that all—eh ?—and talk of marrying ?"

"Enough, too, make the most of it, don't you think so, sir ?"

"For how long—heaven save us—not taking into account the brats, too, are you ?"

Tim smiled, and so did Betty.

"Well," said Betty, "if ever man deserved a lift it is James Hoxton."

"Stuck to it now for fifteen years," echoed Tim; "and, barring Sundays, and Xmas days, not a holiday."

"That's true," cried Betty.

"And shall have a lift, come a chance," sided Daddy; "but not daughter of mine, mind that, in wedlock."

"Time enough, five years hence, with chick like that, to talk of wedlock," said Betty.

"Yes, ten," grunted Daddy, getting up and pacing the room backwards and forwards with his coat tails over his arms.

"Better James Hoxton, though, than somebody else I know," muttered Tim.

"Better nobody — James Hoxton — what next, I wonder?"

Tim stole a glance at Betty.

"What next?"

"Lieutenant Frederick Woodford, sir, I should'nt wonder," said Tim.

Tim had hit the right nail.

Daddy came to a dead halt. The blood left his face pale as parchment, and, dropping

into his chair again, he sat staring at Tim as if stupified.

"Who'd have thought of that, then?" exclaimed Betty, laying down her work in her lap, and clasping her hands over it.

"Anybody with their eyes open, and wits wide awake," replied Tim. "A shrewd hand that old Woodford."

Some faint conceptions of the truth began to dawn on Daddy's mind.

Tim was right—he would rather have followed her to the grave than married daughter of his to a red-coat. The soldier's daughter—what had she cost him for a wife? That lost mortgage—no, no—love her as he might, Geoffry would never get over that. James Hoxton? Yes—James the carpenter—or cobbler—anybody—anything—death itself, rather than another red-coat.

"Dared, has she?" muttered Daddy, striking his knee, and trembling with passion.

"May be only Tim's fancy," soothed Betty. "Best be sure about it."

Only know—James saw them in the Mill-mead yesterday," said Tim.

"Together?"

"Arm-in-arm, and Sophy Woodford with them."

A heavy cloud settled on Daddy's brow.

"The deceit!" cried Betty.

"There'll be no peace in the house, that's clear," said Tim, "unless something's done."

"Shall be," muttered Daddy.

"Give her, for wife, to James Hoxton, sir—I would," advised Tim.

"I do believe he doats on her," said Betty; "though he knows himself too well, does James, to raise so much as eyes to her clandestine-like."

"It would be a good thousand a-year addition to the house," observed Tim. "Who made the maltings pay as they did last summer? He'd work for them like a

horse. A lieutenant's pay—what's that I should like to know?"

The rising words were trembling on Daddy's lips, in answer to this last home-thrust, as Andrew's step crossed the passage; and, immediately afterwards entering the room, Betty had just time to take up her needle again, and Tim to begin on the other thumb, when Molly brought a message from James Hoxton, which calling Daddy out, after him went Tim; on which doubling her work up and putting it in a drawer:—"Now I'll go," said Betty, "and kiss, and make it up if I can; and you try, Andrew, and get James to keep Daddy to tea to-night, and I'll bring her down with me."

Daddy stopped to tea at James Hoxton's; and returned home quite himself again.

Lucretia and Betty had kissed and made it up; but Betty advised an early bed that night, before Daddy came home; promising, as they wished good-night, to

“ see it made all right with him before she went to her pillow.”

Andrew was so delighted, that he treated Molly to a supper of periwinkles, to which Tim was also invited ; but Tim’s joy at the reconciliation was so great, he could not eat a mouthful ; and, so, he took himself off to his own room, and had an hour’s touch at some back-posting.

The periwinkles picked, and Andrew and Molly in bed, the candle was burning its last moments out in the save-all, when, wishing sweet dreams, Daddy shook hands with Betty at the stair-head, as the clocks were striking midnight, after two more hours close conference with her and brother Tim in the back parlour.

Next morning they all met at breakfast, as if nothing had happened, though Lucretia was a little paler and more pensive than usual, and once, when Daddy addressed her kindly, could have almost burst into tears. Betty played her part admirably ; so much

so, that Andrew thought, and told her as much, "he had never seen her look so handsome;" which rather tickling Tim's fancy, there was quite a little buzz and flutter about it, and the meal passed over delightfully.

After Molly had cleared away, and Tim had left the room with Betty, Daddy took up the county newspaper for a minute. Lucretia's heart was full, and, stealing round to his chair, before he was aware she was so near him, she wound an arm round his neck, and, whispering something with choking voice in his ear, kissed his cheek fondly. Daddy gave a little start, and seemed perplexed; but, immediately recovering himself, as he saw the tears fill her eyes, rose from his seat, and, looking at his watch, pressed her offered hand in silence, but without returning her embrace. Still, her eyes implored him to press his lips if only to her forehead, and she would be happy. For a moment he seemed to

hesitate—another, and she had unbosomed every secret of her soul in his:—The father's heart was in it—Betty hurried into the room to fetch her keys:—“Some one wanted him over the way:”—Daddy was gone—and gone too, beyond recall, the precious chance, no wealth of his now could ever restore to him.

CHAPTER III.

“THE OLD FERRY-HOUSE.”

UP in her room alone, Lucretia's heart gave way. When too full, and it can bear no more, there is nothing for the bursting bosom like a good cry, and Lucretia now indulged in it unhindered,

A sense of loneliness had taken possession of her which she had never felt before. True, her father had said nothing to her about Phœbe, and, for him, such forbearance might well re-assure her; but she could not but know she had seriously incurred his displeasure, by breaking one of the strictest rules of the house, and her

heart smote her for selfishly preferring her own wishes to his, in giving away what, in truth, was not her own, any more than the bed she then sat on, or the clothes on her back. She had had recourse to a little deception in the matter, too,—and this brought before her other self-accusing recollections of the past fortnight, made the tears flow faster and faster.—“ Oh ! what would he say if he knew of their Ferry-meetings ? ”—and she sat with her eyes fixed on the floor, and her hands clasped tight in her lap, like a statue.

There was a ring at the street-door bell. She went out on the landing to see who it was. It was Sophy Woodford. Betty had answered it, and received Sophy with open arms. Then, *she* had no suspicions. Yet, there was a something in her manner, and in Tim's, too, puzzled her—something so unusual—too gracious and generous by half, not to conceal under it some selfish purpose. Oh ! what should she do with those red

swollen eyes and cheeks? and Sophy would be up for her in a minute.

The cold water was hardly in the basin with which to give them a good bathing, when up came Sophy, laughing and skipping like a mad-cap for joy—"Betty had been so very agreeable!" Sophy had a sweet, pretty new bonnet on, too, just from London, a present from cousin Fred, and Betty had pronounced it "a beauty!"—and the sun had come out without a cloud, just on purpose for her to wear it—and, altogether, never had Sophy been so happy in her life as that morning:—and, lo! here was a pretty to do, weeping and wailing, and all for what? "Fiddle-de-dee—make haste—that would do—take a sniff at her vinaigrette. What a darling day!—no, not that old dowdy—the white straw with the blue ribbons—*his* favourite—good gracious, there was ten striking—not a word, dearest—knew all about it already—another little breeze with Betty—blown over—that was

right—come along—that would do :—and, fairly off, out they stepped down street at such a pace, well might James Hoxton stare astonished over the blind, and, seizing his hat, run to the door, and their stand rooted till they had quite disappeared round Wool Lane corner

It was a fine, bright, sunny, September morning, without a cloud in the sky, just the beautiful, bright, bracing morning for a long walk, a “ perfect darling of a day,” as Sophy expressed it, “ a day”—and that depicts it exactly—“ made for a new bonnet ;” and blithely hied the girls away to Sophy’s little Samaritan duties for her father at Goose Green, over the mill-mead.

The fresh blow from the water, combined with Sophy’s cheerful chit-chat as they went along, soon chased the sadness from Lucretia’s heart, and, beyond a slight flush of the cheeks more than ordinary, no one, to look at them, would have supposed those beaming blue eyes had ever been without a

smile, much less shed a tear. Indeed, there was an unusual pretty flutter and excitement in her look and tone as they neared the "Old Ferry House," that the bright autumn sky and bracing breezes could hardly account for. On they went, laughing and talking, till, the "Ferry House" coming into full view, they slackened their pace of a sudden, as the tall figure of a young man, in a sportsman's dress, of gentlemanly mien, apparently about four or five and twenty years of age, with his back towards them, and lashing away with his fly-line, peeped forth from among the bushes.

"There he is, darling, I declare," said Sophy, her eyes dancing; "come along, come along."

"Not through all that long wet grass, dear—law, look, it's up to one's knees almost."

"Stuff!—come along—hark—wait a moment—hasn't he a nice voice?"

"Heigh, ho! they may talk of the bonnets of blue,
Of the brave, bonny banners, and tricolours, too;
But, of all the gay colours that I can see,
The bright, dashing scarlet's the colour for me;
 With the rum, tum, tum,
 The fife and the drum,—
 I'll be the wife of a soldier."

Lash, lash, lash, lash away.

"The doctors and lawyers may mingle their sighs,
And the parsons write odes on my hair and my eyes,
But he shall alone call Lucretia his wife,
Who can march to the sound of the drum and the fife;
 With the rum, tum, tum,
 The fife and the drum,—
 I'll be the wife of a soldier."

"You will, will you, you incorrigible girl," laughed Sophy, plunging into the long grass—"come along, then, and I'll be bridesmaid."

Still, Lucretia, looking hesitatingly at her feet, held back.

"Was there ever such a little tiresome prude?" cried Sophy. "You won't? Well, then, make haste, let's go round by the mill lock. You silly thing—do you think he don't see us?"

See them? yes, safe enough did Fred,

though his face was turned another way just then. Yes, and had seen them clearly ever since, when over the last style, only "The Willows" lay between them and "The Ferry." But it had seemingly suited Mr. Fred to be seeing nothing but his line and flies; till now, observing only their backs, and them fast retreating along the towing-path from his gaze:—"hi, there—ho—hollo—hold hard!" cried he at the top of his lungs; and, pitching down his rod, and with the agility of a stag clearing every obstacle in his way, the next minute or two brought him alongside his fair cousin; but why that deep blush in both Lucretia's cheeks, as their eyes met and they shook hands together, is an enigma? those acquainted with such things can best determine.

It was pretty evident, this was not the first time of their meeting; so, we have a clue at once, or something like it, to the meaning of those mysterious blushes.

Yes ; but Sophy “thought it was understood, they were to meet him at old Jennet’s.”

“ There was not any harm, was there, in his borrowing a rod and line of Jem Bray, and having a try as he went along for that two-pounder under the apron, had given Jem a dance after him now ever since the May-fly ? Yes—and look—he had bagged his lordship !”

“ No, had he ?—What a beauty !”

“ Yes, and a precious sharp appetite it had given him. So, come along, they’d leave him with Jennet to broil and get ready for their luncheon, while he pulled them up to the Mill in the boat, if they liked.”

No one could beat Jennet at broiling a speckled belly, or tossing off a dish of pancakes ; and, the boat brought safe to anchor, down the happy trio sat to Jennet’s tempting round oak-table, hungry as hunters.

It was quite a little Waltonian parlour that of Jennet Crofts, famed for miles round for its sweet fresh fries and glass of

pure pale malt and hops. Nay, report said, times back, more than once, old Isaac himself had disported himself, and joyously, too, under the thatched-roof of "The Brother-Anglers." Certes, the "Angler's Home," was well worthy of him, if he did, as sundry quaint piscatory canons and curious couplets sufficiently attested on its wainscot walls and windows, illustrated on all sides by achievements in the gentle art almost fabulous to think on, and some of which—it was not impossible—his own honoured right hand had given their immortality to.

Isaac's veritable own, or not, there was some of the genuine mettle in them; and nothing would do but that Sophy, after the cloth was drawn, should take her tablets and pencils, and transcribe some of them a-fresh for Fred's especial keeping, while he and Lucretia rambled together round the garden and orchards—then paid a visit to the bees, the pigeons, the poultry, and the pigsties—then, as dear Sophy had not quite

finished yet, rowed her again a little way up the river, and back; when, looking at his watch, Fred, to his amazement, found it was close on one.

Lucretia turned pale. How time flies unheeded with a lover! With her utmost haste she could not reach home now till their dinner was nearly over—what would her father say? Fred knew a short cut, would get them to “The Chequers,” step out a-pace, in less than half an hour; and then, five minutes more, and she would be there.”

“Let’s be stepping out a-pace, then,” advised Sophy; and, pressing on, the town-clocks were striking the three quarters, when, crimson with the haste she had made, Lucretia gained her father’s door. Her heart beat so, she felt that a feather’s weight would almost sink her to the earth, and, squeezing Sophy’s hand, the bell twice slipped from her fingers, she trembled so about it.

As one struck, Daddy had sat down to dinner.

For thirty years Molly had been his cook, and never, but when illness laid her up, had Molly been five minutes behind hand with the dinner. Punctuality at meals, as in everything else, if there was to be any peace in the house, was indispensable with Daddy. And Daddy always said grace himself, and nothing angered him more than for any one of them not to hear him say it. Daddy was tenaciously scrupulous about all, what he called, his "Christian duties." He went to church every Sunday, health permitting, mornings and evenings, in all weathers; feasted the clergyman regularly once a month, and sang hymns to him with Lucretia at the spinet; gave away cheap Bibles and Prayer-Books; had the lessons and a chapter read out to him on Sabbath nights; was especially affected with the parable of The Ten Talents, and of

Lazarus and Dives; but, except to the parochial rates, was never known to give a shilling to the poor;—and, when Betty came to that verse of St. Matthew—

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath,”—

he would bid her pause, and repeat it; and then declare—“the comfort those words gave him was heavenly and unspeakable!”

As the clocks struck one, Daddy took his chair at the head of the table; and, rising to say grace, asked “why Lucretia was absent?”

Betty’s knitted brows told him, “she had not returned from her walk.”

Daddy sat down to his kidney-dumpling, said nothing, and seemed to enjoy it greatly.

Molly was famed for kidney-dumplings, running over with gravy; and never had she made a lighter or nicer crust than she had that day. So, the dinner passed off pretty well. Then, Daddy bethought him

again of the vacant chair, and, picking at the cloth, he got cross and touchy, and fidgetted in his seat, and for two farthings, would have got up a quarrel with Andrew ; so, Andrew slipped off ; and soon Tim after him—leaving Betty alone to manage and amuse him ; but Betty knew her father, and, taking out her work, was all industry ; till presently, hot and flushed and excited, in came Miss Lucretia.

Daddy looked up, gave her a cold, stern glance, drew his chair sharp round to the window ; and, snatching up the *Hillborough Mercury*, seemed after a moment or two utterly regardless of her presence.

As she took her seat at the table, Betty eyed her wistfully, and, pushing across the dumpling, now cold and heavy as lead, told her to help herself—“ and pity she hadn’t come in while it was nice and hot—should Molly make it warm again ? ”

A grunt from Daddy.

“ No, thank you, it will do very well as

it is," said Lucretia, and, drawing the dish to her, helped herself in silence.

"Law! what's the matter with your face and neck, child?" cried Betty, starting; "why, you're out all in a fever, like."

Daddy shot a keen glance at her over the *Mercury*.

"I have been walking so very fast," explained Lucretia; and, returning to the dumpling, she tried her best to eat some, though her stomach recoiled as she carried it to her mouth. Still, she got a bit down, Betty watching her keenly from under her shaggy eyebrows all the while.

The fact is, had it been piping hot, instead of cold as a stone, just then Fred's trout and pancakes had spoilt her rather for Molly's cooking. But, being stone cold, certainly stone-cold kidney dumpling was not the best provocative.

"And Jennet Croft's ailing, is she?" asked Betty, going on with the sheet she was sewing.

"Young Jennet? yes, a little."

"Good luck, she's well to do, is Jennet. Poor child! Sophy taken her a something maybe?"

"A little chicken for her Sunday's dinner."

"Chicken! Bless us and save us! well to be Sophy Woodford. And been there all this time?"

"There, and round about, yes."

"And can't eat a bit either, and walked four miles, if you've walked an inch, I'll warrant?"

Lucretia tried at another mouthful.

"And not a morsel in your lips since breakfast? Can't eat cold dumpling, maybe? Molly must get us a chicken, musn't she? A couple at market on Saturday;—let's see—four and sixpence Dolly wanted for 'em, wasn't it?"

Another grunt from Daddy.

"Might get them for four shillings."

Grunt—grunt—grunt.

Spite of the consequences, as she played with her knife and fork, Lucretia could not repress a slight smile at a pleasantry of Sophy's which crossed her at the moment, which Betty perceiving, a shade black as night passed over her face, and letting fall the sheet from her hand, she fixed her eyes upon her half-sister, as though she would have slain her.

But Lucretia winced not. Her only safety was in silence, and she held her tongue.

This enraged Betty beyond endurance. If there was one thing more than another that incensed her always, it was to think she was being laughed at.

Poor Lu saw her danger, and did her best to compose her features; but, in the further attempt to get a bit more of the dumpling down, a spasmodic heaving of the chest followed—her lips were convulsively contracted—and, holding her handkerchief to her mouth, the feeling of sickness was

after her walk yesterday, her papa had positively forbidden her to go out any more at present, except when she, Betty, was with her."

This also Betty made known, through Molly, to her sister when she sent her up her breakfast. Lucretia was stunned. "Could Betty have found the note she had lost? She was sure she had it safe in her pocket that morning. And, if she had, she would be certain to show it to her father; and then—oh! how unwise she had been!—she should lose the only heart in the world she could rely on—the only friend who had any real care or affection for her." And, greatly perplexed, poor Lucretia sank into a chair, with her head on her hand, to try and think what was best to be done.

Her first thought was to write at once to Sophy; but, that done, how was Sophy to get the letter? Could she trust Molly? She was Betty's minion in everything,

though she feared her more than loved her. No, she dared not—what would become of her, poor old creature! if she got her into trouble. Then, if in any way Fred could have been put upon his guard. He was so impatient and impetuous, and so daring, when determined! “Oh, how miserable she was! And then came stealing the thoughts of their last meeting—of every fond word and look—how handsome he was, how gentlemanly, how generous—how happy she could be! Oh, what joy to be free, and fearless, her own mistress—to love, and be beloved, as she felt she could, and should be then. For that, a crust and cup of water only, how immeasurably more precious to her than—with the life she then led, their gold their only God—all her father’s wealth. What single hour of true happiness had it ever brought her? and down came the hot tears at the thought; and, throwing herself on her bed, Lucretia cried herself to sleep again.

Now, this, perhaps, was not what Lucretia's better sense, in after years, would have said was brave of her ; but allowances must be made. Not a heart beating in the breast of any one of my fair readers is a better heart than her's was. Well, if they be as good. But it is to be hoped, they, one and all, have a happier home than she had. Oh, it makes a world of difference, that happy home !

And, doubtless, Daddy thought so, too—thought that his gold had made his all that home ought to be.

If so—it seems, his wretched child, on her tear-soaked pillow, was not very grateful for it.

Had Daddy's gold made his home all that it ought to have been ?

During Mary, his wife's life, it certainly had some little claim to the sweet charms carolled of it in Bishop's sweetest ballad. Then, though hardly *sweet*, it was home, however homely ; and Lucretia, especially,

was too young, too simple, too dutiful, and obedient, to think or feel about it in any other light. But, her beloved mother gone, gone also was the only spirit gave light and love to Geoffry's house ; and, though it was her home still, and, as such, she clung to it by nature—tell us of one single feature in it, after sister Betty got the rule, to bind to it a human heart of Christian mould—a heart like Lucretia's, with its Maker's image still strong as created there, and overflowing with love and charity to all ?

Geoffry's whole life, since he could think and act, had, like all his race, been devoted to one object—Gold was his God. And, though Mary for a time seemed to share his worship, he had his Mammon-Idol ever to run to, and waiting to welcome him with open arms ; and, had the *fiat* been, choose of the two, your Mary, or your Mammon—alas poor Mary !

It was, verily, Mammon-House, complete, was Geoffry's home. One all-absorbing

thirst engrossed his soul ; and wife, children, friends, and neighbours, all might have been swept away, so that his darling Idol still opened its arms to him, and filled his money-chests.

Of all his children, he would have missed Tim most, for he was most like himself, besides being his first-born, and rightful heir. After him, Betty, for she was a saving, careful child, and governed his household well. Then, Andrew ; and, last of them, Lucretia ; though, as the image of her sweet lady-mother, his heart would grudgingly yearn towards her a little at times, and make Betty savagely jealous. To say he ever truly loved her would be too much. Her whole nature was so entirely and unalterably the antipodes of his own, that the difficulty was, how to prevent a constant clashing. And this was how it happened, that Tim was always advocating her being "out and settled," as he called it, "if there was to be any peace in the house with them." But

as she grew to womanhood, and her judgment ripened, Tim's fears became less and less ; till, so amiable was she to them all, at last he began almost to envy Andrew the walks, and songs, and sweet smiles, she lavished on him, and there was quite a little rivalry at one time between them about her. This added nothing but anger to anger, with sister Betty, who would never brook any loss of Tim's attentions ; so that Tim was forced to give in, and Betty got such a powerful hold at last, and Andrew kept his ground so well, that she could lead him this way or that, just as she liked ; and, so, commenced the separate couples in which they used to go together ; and, so long as neither Daddy's peace nor pockets were touched, go on they might, as it pleased them best, he cared nothing at all about it.

Though the image of her mother, in form and features, some said more beautiful, Lucretia's mind, wanting, if called for, none of the sound strength and decision of

Mary's, was more sensitive and impulsive, and led her often to make Daddy think she was thoughtless and unthrifty. This, had she been beautiful as an angel, and as pure, would have marred it all in Daddy's eyes ; and when—his gaze on her—he was, seemingly, admiring her most, he was thinking far more of her mother than of her ; and Betty little imagined at such times, when she could have almost struck her with rage and jealousy, how little cause there was for fear—how much, in truth, with all her beauty, and Christian spirit, poor Lu was suffering by comparison.

That she was beautiful, and good and unselfish as she was lovely, and so meek and patient and sweet-tempered, that none could anger her to resentment, and gentlemanly and generous as she was just, Daddy's eyes knew full well, if not his heart ; but, with all, wanting the main one thing needful in Daddy's sight—the grand art of money-making,—no, no, Betty need have

had no fear ; Betty, very plain and coarse and vulgar as she was, by the side of female perfection itself, minus that one charm, would have been a Venus in Geoffry's eyes.

Beauty, for itself, Daddy valued not a pin. Mary was beautiful, but the least beauty he saw in her was her face. Perhaps it was because she was so beautiful, and yet so bent devotedly to his will, that he loved her as he did ; it was, possibly, a rare compound, that sweet face and saving nature of his Mary's, which he had never seen before.

The Westminster women, of his race, had never been remarkable for beauty. On the contrary, with hardly an exception, they had ever been notoriously noted for their exceeding plainness and vulgarity. In his heart there is little doubt but that Daddy prized the old face most. Unquestionably, Betty carried the day against Lucretia, and she, Betty, was, all said, a cast identical from the old —shire model. Daddy would often sit and look, too, at her, as she

plied her needle, with approving eyes ; and then walk off to his ledger ; and, utterly forgetful of the sweet girl—the pride of his race, as everyone told him—knitting him with fondest heart and hopes, there on a low hassock at Betty's feet, his little woollen comforters for the winter, with all her might and main,—enter hundreds after hundreds to the tune of Betty ; nor once the sweet name of Lucretia ever seem to come across his thoughts.

“ Yes, the old face for Daddy against the world ! It had always smiled sweetest on him. Look at his ledgers, then—bore they not Betty's prototype in every page ? Where therein could he find one lineament of Lucretia ? Why deviate a hair's breadth from the old line ? Had it ever led him wrong ? What did his father and grandfather die worth ? Ha !—peace to their ashes—they stuck to the old forms. Yes, by the souls of his ancestors ! and he would stick to the old forms, too ;” and, going on

with the hundreds, well might Betty cry ditto, and be proud of her own face.

And now again comes the question,—for still, though nearly noon, lay poor Lu, with her pale cheek on her arm, asleep on her tear-soaked pillow,—had Daddy's gold made his home what his home ought to have been?

The reader will judge of this best for himself, if he will please to go on with the story.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESCALADE.

WHEN Lucretia woke, she found, lying on the table beside her untasted cup of cold tea and plate of bread and butter, a letter for her in Betty's handwriting ; and, opening it with beating heart, she read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR LUCRETIA,

“ Whatever little disagreements there
“ may have been between us ever, I hope
“ and trust are all forgotten and for-
“ given by you, as they are by me, your
“ loving sister. I never had anything
“ but your welfare and happiness at
“ heart, and that you know, though you

“ may have sometimes thought me a little
“ cross and tiresome. And now let me
“ prove to you, my dear sister, how much I
“ love you, how much dear father and all of
“ us love you, and think, and pray for your
“ welfare and happiness.

“ I would have come up, as you are
“ poorly, and had a chat with you on the
“ subject, but was afraid of fatiguing you ;
“ and thought, by writing what is upper-
“ most for you in all our hearts, you could
“ better quietly think it over before Daddy
“ saw you about it, which he means to do in
“ a day or two. And then, my dear child,
“ I hope and trust, for all our sakes, you
“ will only have one answer to give him,
“ *which he has set his mind on*, and, so, make
“ us all glad and happy.

“ Well, then, I am sure, dearest, you
“ know as well as we all do, with what
“ tender and respectful interest Mr. James
“ Hoxton has regarded you for now a long
“ time past? I do not say, dear Daddy,

“ for you know he’s not very quick ever at
“ seeing these sort of things, though I’ll
“ warrant he has had *his* eyes open, too, as
“ well as others.—Yes, poor young man !
“ I have known it long enough, and so has
“ Tim, and Andrew, too, I’ll be bound ;
“ though he would have as much dared to
“ lift his eyes to one of us, dearest, loving-
“ like, would James, before Daddy, as flown.
“ All the same, if ever honest man loved a
“ woman as honest man ought, that man is
“ James Hoxton ; and, if there’s truth on
“ earth, and I’m not blind, he loves, to dis-
“ traction, Lucretia Westminster.

“ Well he may be sheepish, and back-
“ ward, and drop his eyes before Daddy ;
“ though, as for that, the Hoxton’s, by the
“ father’s side, come of as good stock as
“ any in Shropshire. And now James has
“ a clear two hundred pounds a-year from
“ the house ; and, if he behave himself,
“ Daddy will do him a good turn by and bye ;
“ and, then, his mother’s portion won’t be

“less, Tim says, than seven thousand
“pounds. So, he won’t be coming on the
“parish easily? Then, he works like a horse.
“Tim says, it would be a good thousand a-
“year better for the business, if you would
“have him, darling.

“If—there’s no if in the matter. I
“know your kind, loving, generous heart
“too well for that. You cannot be insen-
“sible, impossible, to such worth and true
“goodness as there are in James; and, for
“looks—shew me a handsomer fellow any-
“where, in his worst clothes even?

“It is but fair to tell you, dearest, that,
“encouraged by Tim’s countenance, he,
“James, has opened his heart to him; and
“Tim his to me; and last night I got
“Daddy alone, and had it all out with him.
“At first, he wouldn’t hear of it--“there
“was time enough to talk of marrying, ten
“years hence.”—But in came James with
“Tim, just handy, and they talked it over
“again, love, with a glass of whiskey and

“ water ;—and I only wish you could have
“ seen and heard James—there now—he’s
“ what I call a man—if I wasn’t almost
“ falling in love with him myself, he spoke
“ so sensible and friendly-like, and feel-
“ ingly ! Daddy was quite taken ! and,
“ shaking hands, I saw the tears absolutely
“ standing in his eyes as they parted. So
“ now, my dear sister, I will say no more at
“ present, but that your consent is all that
“ is wanting to make us happy. I never
“ saw dear Daddy more *in earnest* ; and it
“ only remains for you, love, to crown his
“ wishes ; and then I am sure he will do all
“ a good and kind and loving father ought
“ for your mutual happiness ; and that he
“ may always do so is the prayer of

“ Your ever affectionate Sister,

“ ELIZABETH WESTMINSTER.”

“ P.S. I am sorry to see you are still so
“ poorly, and think you ought to nurse
“ yourself, dear, carefully for a day or two.
“ Those long walks were too much so soon

“ after your illness. Molly will take you
‘ up a little veal broth for your dinner, and
“ one of your favourite nice light bread
“ puddings in a cup, that you used to be so
“ fond of. And, if you feel stronger after,
“ I shall come up and have a chat with you. *
“ I peeped in just now, and you were fast
“ asleep.”

Thrice, without gesture or visible emotion of any kind, save what the slightest trembling of the lip, as she held the letter open before her, might indicate, Lucretia read it from beginning to end :—when, taking pen and paper, and repeating to herself—“ has set his mind on it”—“ never saw him more in earnest,” she hastily wrote a few lines to Sophy Woodford ; and, ringing the bell, up came Molly to the summons.

“ Is sister Elizabeth in ?”

“ No, she has gone round to the butcher’s, to buy a bit of veal for some broth.”

“ Is my brother Timothy ?”

"Just passed up street with James Hoxton."

"Is Andrew?"

"May be, in the garden, helping getting in the walnuts."

"Will you ask him to come up to me, if so?"

"Is it anything I can do?"

"Not now, Molly, thank you; but by and bye I think I should like a little of the veal broth, when you have made it—I could relish that."

"Yes, yes; and I'll—but needn't say a word about it to Miss Betsy—I'll put in a cup of rice, too, and a pinch of parsley,—that's how you liked it, didn't you, after the fever? Mercy me! and not touched a morsel of breakfast? Never mind, I'll leave it, 'case you fancy a bit presently."

"Thank you, Molly; and won't forget to send Andrew up?"

"No, no; he'll be up, be sure, catch him can I, quick enough."

Before Molly could have delivered her message five minutes, after washing his hands, Andrew made his appearance ; and, exchanging kisses, sat down on a chair by the bed foot.

“ Are you better now ? ”

“ Yes, a little, thank you, Andrew.”

“ Can’t think how it is you are now always ailing so—I am never ill.”

“ How thankful you ought to be ! ”

Though this was not quite the light in which Andrew was just then looking at it, he could not but smile ; and, to prove that he *was* grateful, broke off a piece of the bread and butter, and ate it with great relish.

“ You havn’t eaten a morsel, though, yourself, seemingly ? ” said he.

“ I have no appetite.”

“ That’s bad ”—and Andrew, again in proof of it, finished the slice.

“ Will you do me a kindness, Andrew ? ”

“ Yes,—if I can.”

"Take this note for me to Sophy Woodford?"

Andrew took the note in his hand, turned it this way, and that, eyeing it wistfully the while; when, seemingly resolved,—“Well, yes—I don’t mind if I do,” said he—“that is—if—if”—

“What?”

“It won’t anyhow burn my fingers for it.”

Lucretia fixed her eyes, now swimming with tears, on her brother’s; and, putting Betty’s letter before him:—“have you seen this?” she asked.

Andrew read it through with all the cool method and calmness he would have given to a bill of lading.

“No.”

“Nor had any hand in it either?”

“No.”

“Nor any knowledge, in anywise, of its contents?”

“Well, certainly I did hear as much as

that James Hoxton was looking sweet on you, that's true; and that Tim and Betty wanted Daddy to make a match of it."

"And Daddy?"

"Stormed a bit at first, but came round, after a little, kind enough."

"And you—what said you?"

"What said I? Well—that I had no objection to it,—*if you hadn't.*"

"Well said, dear Andrew! Thank you. When I give my consent, you may yours. Andrew, it would break my heart to wed James Hoxton."

"Would it?" cried Andrew, planting his two broad palms on his knees, and staring full into his sister's face.

"I would rather die first!"

"Then—hang me if you ever shall!" and, rolling up another slice of the bread and butter, Andrew gulped it, and the rising oath with it—washing it all down with a pull at the cold tea. Then, putting the note for Sophy Woodford in his pocket, pressed his

lips fondly to the offered cheek ; and, seizing his hat, in less than ten minutes the note was safe enough in Sophy's hands.

Sophy had hardly recovered from the crushing effects of Betty's letter to her, putting a stop to the walks, when here was other pressing business to attend to, called for all her skill and courage.

"Daddy had set his mind on making Lucretia Mrs. Hoxton."

Fred's wrath was terrific ! He was true sons of Mars, and the thunderbolts he let fly at "Mammon-House" were fearful ! He was only calmed at last, in a measure, by Sophy positively assuring him :—"She had something in her head ; and, if he would be but patient and reasonable, she would bring it to bear, too ; and then he might snap his fingers at them all.

Fred had the greatest confidence in his fair cousin, who had helped him more than once, at a pinch ; and, promising to act implicitly as she directed him, cooled down so

completely, that, meeting James Hoxton that evening, he not only gave him the wall, but stopped and asked him after the family, and particularly “ hoped he himself was quite well ? ”

Was it possible that such a shrewd, far-seeing head as Dr. Woodford’s could, in its love for his nephew, suppose for a moment that Geoffry Westminster would ever give daughter’s hand of his to a red-coat ? Knew any one better than Dr. Woodford differently from that ? What could those pleasant walks end in, then ? True. But it is just possible, the doctor may have argued, “ that, though a red-coat was the last colour in the world to find favour in Daddy’s eyes—the girl gained, half the battle was won ; and, come good luck, and the knot tied, even Daddy must give in ; and, then, if master Fred minded his hits,—who knew, he might make him a colonel, some day ? ”

Fred saw it exactly in the same light. It was a sort of short cut to certain fortune

and happiness suited Freds's notions precisely; and his vanity never entertained the slightest doubt, but that, give him the chance, it must be a strange woman's heart indeed could resist Lieutenant Frederick Woodford.

Sophy managed it admirably—gave him the chance,—and, as far as it went, no one could have made a much better use of it.

But now came a ruthless blow that threatened to dash all their hopes to dust.

Fred, as we have seen, stamped and stormed, and with some reason, for he fondly loved the girl; and, with so many mighty powers against him, how was she ever to be his?

Sophy saw it was a serious case—there was no joking with Daddy. And, with Tim on his side, well might James Hoxten cock his head so saucily as they walked up street, arm-in-arm with each other. It was the more serious, moreover, as Fred's leave of absence from his regiment would be up in

six weeks, and then he must, little wife, or not, be off to Malta.

A day or two passed ; but whatever was in Sophy's head, there lay hatching, and putting poor Fred out of all patience, to imagine what was to come of it ; while his uncle nearly drove him wild, by, whenever the subject came up, recommending a little less agitation, which played the deuce with the bile, and quite spoilt his good looks. He must not forget, too—marry without Daddy's consent, and, as sure as he was a living man, he would cut her off with a shilling.

That Fred “ would risk. He did not believe he could be such a brute ; he would take his chance of it. He had £450 in the bank, and his Aunt Barbara loved him dearly. It was not money made people happy. Look at old Geoffry himself—with half a million of money and over, was there ever such a miserable old dog ? Oh, if dear Sophy would only break the egg, and let

come out that darling little chick of a thought which had been hatching in her dear little brain so long :—there, then, he would tell her what he would do—as sure as his name was Frederick, get her a husband, and a good one, from the 46th.”

It needed it not—the chick of a thought was hatched ; and, “ just, please to restrain himself within something like reasonable bounds, and she would let it out, and show him what a clever one it was. And, first, to talk plain English, she had hit on a capital way to get a letter to dear Lucretia.”

“ She had ?—bless her sweet pretty face for that ! Then there was nothing further to fear about ?”

“ On the contrary ;—but shut the door, and sit down, and she would tell him all about it, if he would let her.”

For five minutes full, Fred, bursting with impatience, listened to his sweet cousin without interrupting her once ; when, jumping up, and tossing his hat in the air,

it was pretty evident, he was either out of his senses, or with as good as the right key in his hand, assuredly, to Daddy's heart and money-bags?

But during all these caperings and cap tossings, how were matters going on at head-quarters, with Daddy himself?—very much, indeed, after the usual fashion.

If the world had been coming to an end the very next week, it is a question whether it would have disarranged Daddy's ordinary daily rules one tittle. Once, when a great comet was in a day or two to come and burn up all Hillborough, as well as the rest of the world, to a cinder, and the neighbours, panic-struck, were gathered together in terrified little knots at every turn, to anticipate the coming doom with their smoked lenses and telescopes,—Geoffrey sat unmoved—get him from his counting-house who could. No, there he stuck to his stool and his loved ledgers before him—
“He had yet more entries to make. But,

when he had done them, and had had his supper, he would step out, if he could spare time, and have a look at it, perhaps, before he went to bed.

Daughter Betty's triangular billet-doux, therefore, did not trouble Daddy much, after the first outbreak; though Lucretia, now up and about again, and apparently agreeable enough with James Hoxton, could see his manner towards her, although, for him, kinder on the whole, was a good deal changed since the affair of the cold dumpling, notwithstanding Betty's letter had made all that up; that he was graver, too, and more thoughtful than he used to be; and would keep his eyes sternly fixed on her, when he thought she did not notice it; and hardly ever addressed her now except through Betty; and would snap her up short when she spoke; and lecture at her while Tim ridiculed her for her "precious piety!"—so that she was heartily glad when she could get away, and, escaping to

her room, there indulge her own thoughts in freedom.

And then she would let loose the burdened heart, and make it amends over the treasured little missives of love and affection that found their way to her somehow almost daily from Sophy. Over these she would sit, and pore, and ponder, and shed such tears of comfort, that when she met her father next at breakfast, her heart was so light, she could return his darkest frown with a smile ; till Betty got quite agreeable, and Tim so affectionate and attentive, soon nothing would do, but that " they should all go together some evening, and drink tea at James Hoxton's.

Daddy smiled his consent.

Betty clapped her hands ; but only feared—" unless James made haste and let it come off quick, there would be no business done right, till it did."

But the little secret missives, to and fro, failed not. And James's tea party came off ;

and that night James's heart beat high. And, as he pressed her hand, to say good night, Tim put a new golden guinea—wonderful for him!—into Lu's palm—while her cheeks burned for shame at the deception she was practising,—and, wishing her joy in a whisper, went and had half-an-hour's more chat with Betty, before she got into bed; and they settled it all, even to the dress she was to wear, and who were to be the bridesmaids, and where they were to go for the honeymoon; while Lucretia, in blissful ignorance, and fairly tired out with the night's masquerade, was sleeping soundly; but of which lover dreaming, or whether, in truth, of either, is more than I can say, and so, in fairness to both, best not to hazard a guess about it.

Was it possible, Tim, so wary and watchful, had no eye to what was going on? Another week passed; when, owing, it was alleged, to a daring robbery with violence

in the town, Daddy would have all his windows barred from top to bottom ; and the smith and mason should come and set about it that very day.

Next morning they came by daylight ; and in a little while Geoffry's house was made as safe as the county gaol.

Betty looked up from opposite, and " thought them a great improvement, those iron bars—now they should sleep in peace."

Tim agreed—" give them a coat of black paint, and they would look beautiful !"

Andrew was " for green like the trees."

Lucretia at first gave a little shudder at the sight of them ; but " she should soon get used to them. Paint her's, a coat of white, or stone-colour, and she should not object to them at all."

Betty was all kindness—" she could have them painted any colour she liked best."

On went the little missives to and fro.

The painters brought their paint-pots,

up they were on their ladders, and had finished it all before the young ladies were out of bed.

There then! was there ever anything so unfortunate? The blockheads!—they had made a blunder—painted Miss Lucretia's the black, and Miss Elizabeth's the light-stone. It was all Molly's fault:—"in the dim of the morning she had quite mistaken them, she had; should they give them a fresh coat?"

"That would cost just double, wouldn't it? or Betty would not have minded it. Hear what Daddy said to it first."

"Waste not—want not:—no—wicked waste—Daddy wouldn't hear of it."

In went a little note under the tile:—"Mind, there had been a mistake—*her* bars were the *black*, the *stone* ones sister Betty's."

Tim knew that very well, did he not, without being told it again?

For more than a month Tim had not been—that any one knew of—once in the

garden. Though Lucretia daily took a walk round it and about, never by any chance had she met Tim coming in or out. True, he was cracking a walnut then, with a bit of salt in his palm, under the old tree, and did not seem to notice her till she passed him. Why beat her heart so fast then? But it did beat, and a gloom hung over it all that day that she could not shake off; though it was Saturday, when all the house were so busy always; and, "perhaps Tim had only run in, after all, for an apple and a nut or two after dinner."

Another Sabbath dawned. Blessed day of rest! of that sweet, peaceful rest, that Heaven-fraught, holy rest, should still all hearts into patience that suffer pain, and join and hold wretched and happy in one Christian bond of mutual charity and love. What rest, indeed, might there be for all, who received, and used you, as they ought!

Day of rest! Yes—and so Daddy called it, too; and went to church with his house-

hold, all, save old Molly, who stayed at home for the baked dinner; and, when evening came, had the collect, and lessons read to him by Betty, and a chapter from the bible, and sang a hymn with them all:—and, had a shivering knock come to his door, and his God had put him to the test, and asked him for a shilling—where would Daddy's *rest* have been? Daddy's pocket was at peace, from out of which spoke the heart, and sprung the hymns, and was muttered the blessings, that sent his children to their pillows; and, his head on his own, closed his old eyes, too, in sleep—blessing himself—blessing the hugged thought, that, “it had cost him nothing—not a penny—and, yet, see how well and happy they all were!”

Daddy had no more fear of robbers now; and, safe at all points, soon was snoring away, filled to surfeit, with all the horrors of penury tearing at his vitals like so many vultures.

Midnight had struck about an hour. All

was still as the grave, out and in. You might have almost heard a mouse run over the old house.

Dressed, and with her cloak and bonnet on, and a small bundle by her side on the table, Lucretia sat, pale as death, and motionless, with her eyes fixed on the window, till the clocks tolled the half hour; when suddenly there was a dull indistinct sound, as of muffled voices and footsteps, immediately underneath; then a sort of hurried scraping and clambering on the bricks; then came a pause of half a minute; then the steps and clambering seemed mounting higher; then a moment's pause more,—while Lucretia, trembling so that she could hardly stand, held for support to the casement.—“Hark—no—merciful heaven!—she was lost—he had gone to her sister's window—what—what was that;”—there was a sudden wrench as with a crowbar at the iron bars—the window was thrown open—something was pushed violently from the wall—then came

a heavy fall to the ground, followed by a cry of rage, and pain, and vengeance, mingled with stifled laughs, and scorn, and threats; then the window was slammed to—heavy footsteps crossed the room, and came hurrying along the passage to her door; but it was locked and bolted;—more dead than alive, while the cold drops gathered on her forehead, Lucretia heard him try it—it was Tim—she knew his breathing,—then, with all his might, put his whole strength to it to force it open; but it would not yield: then she heard Betty speak low, and thick, and fast; when, applying their united efforts, open they burst it, torn from its hinges—and stood glaring on her like two tigers:—the blood ran freezing in her veins—her head reeled—the room ran round with her—and she fell senseless to the floor;—nor saw nor heard more, till, with the full blaze of day, she opened her wandering eyes on old Molly, sitting moodily sewing by her bed side.

CHAPTER V.

THE REMOVAL.

BEFORE another Sabbath came round, Lucretia was safely lodged, under strict ward and watch, at a distant relation of the Rev. Mr. Plover's, some sixty miles from Hillborough.

The shock threw Daddy on his bed for a day or two. They were afraid he would have a fit, as he had about nine months before ; but he soon got up and about again as usual, though much shaken.

There was a cabinet council held in the little back parlour, to which Mr. Plover and James Hoxton were invited—to consider

whether the marriage with James should take place forthwith, or be deferred for a short while.

Tim was for an early day ; so was Betty, as soon as Lucretia's health was sufficiently restored ; as they considered, " that would be the safest and surest way to make her happy, and remove all further cause of apprehension."

Andrew sided with Mr. Plover—" that a total removal for a time from home would be the best course to adopt, with a view to make her forget the past, and fall in cheerfully with Daddy's paternal wishes for her welfare by and bye."

Daddy inclined to this view of it himself ; and, if Mrs. Fairfax, of Beymouth, of whom Mr. Plover spoke so warmly, would receive her, she should go, as soon as she could bear the journey."

Mr. Plover " had no doubt but that Mrs. Fairfax would be only too glad to receive her into her establishment at Bey-

mouth, as a young friend of his ; but, to make sure, he could write to her by that night's post, and by return get all particulars in black and white ? Poor child ! she had been sadly misled. He was never so surprised ! Not a lamb of his flock had he looked on as more promising. It was a great pity ! But, left to her own heart, and better judgment, under the kind and watchful eye of such a friend as Grace Fairfax, he was not without sanguine hopes of the result. Time, he earnestly trusted, was all that was wanting to make her see her error ; and to be all, so to speak, with a little patience and good management, they could wish her."

Tim bit his thumb, and muttered something about " the damages—about finishing establishments—about the Fairfax-figure ?"

As to that, Betty " would not mind stretching a point for once, if it was for her welfare and happiness ; though the sort of *finishing* most wanted, she thought, in that

quarter, was not your graces and gimcracks, but how to do with plain things, and keep a tidy house over head as it ought to be."

"And that," Mr. Plover considered, "no one, as well by example as by precept, could, and would, not only teach, but enforce, better than Grace Fairfax."

Andrew "thought no force would be wanted."

"If it could be done, without the Woodford's knowing where she was gone to"—that was James Hoxton's "only worry."

"Leave it all to him;" he, Mr. Plover, "thought he knew of a plan would remove all fear on that score."

"What was it?" asked Geoffry.

"He would take her himself—a blow by the sea would do him good for a few days. He would pledge himself to deliver her safe—and without any one but themselves knowing a word about it—into Grace Fairfax's hands. He would do anything in his power for such old and valued friends. He paid his brother a visit, and should com-

bine business with pleasure. And, 'as he should drive across—making two days of it—if Andrew would take a seat in the four-wheel, he would be nice company for him coming back ; and, having a brother, Jonas, a fellow labourer in the vineyard, at Bournemouth, they could put up at his house, and, so, only be the night's stay on the road, and turnpikes, out of pocket."

" Good—good," said Daddy, rubbing his hands, " so be it ;"—and poor Fred, fairly non-plused, and almost wild with passion, came hurrying breathless to Sophy, a few days after—his poor dislocated arm in a sling—with the no less overwhelming intelligence, than that, " the miserly old villain had packed her off—no one knew when, or whither."

" Oh, they don't, don't they?" said Sophy, crimsoning, then turning white, and then red again—" we must see about that ;" and, putting on her bonnet and shawl, and bidding Fred " be more of a man, and not

show the white-feather that way," went out to do some little errands for her father.—and one or two of her own also.

The parting scene at Daddy's may be left to imagination. To the eye it was as affectionate as it need to have been. Daddy's heart melted a little at the last, and, after thrice going to his strong-box, he brought a £5 note back with him in his hand, and, presenting it to Betty, told her, "to go up and give it to her sister."

Tears dimmed her eyes as Lucretia took it; when Betty, kissing her on both cheeks, led her down to father; and, then, Daddy, too, kissed her forehead, as Andrew stood ready with his hat to take her to the vicarage; and Tim embraced her tenderly; and James Hoxton wrung her hand, and looked unutterable things after her as she vanished from his sight;—and then, all of them returning to the parlour, Betty went out to Molly; and presently in came Molly with

some glasses and a bottle of gooseberry wine ;—nor did James shake hands and bid good-bye till they had emptied it ; and, somewhat consoled, his heart had partly lost “ the lead-lumpish fee ” as he expressed it, had made him quite spooney all the morning, ready to cry his eyes out.”

James had some goodish points, barring his face and figure. Nature had not been very considerate for him there. But she had given him, though a coarse, a fair share of right mind, and a heart soft enough for hard dealings. He was a short, fair, fat, man, of about thirty-five, with carotty hair and whiskers, small piercing light-grey eyes, a long, large nose, rather sensual mouth, a short bull-neck, thick-set make, and enormous hands and feet. His manners were rather awkward than vulgar ; and, when in temper, and he smiled and showed a good white, even, set of teeth, there were times, as Betty said, that he looked “ quite handsome—even in his worst clothes.” He

usually carried a red and white-spotted cotton pocket-handkerchief in his hand, to mop his face and forehead with, which were commonly bathed in perspiration, as if he had just been running a race ; but, withal, no clearer-headed man of business than James Hoxton, or one, with all his personal short-comings in Lucretia's eyes, that Daddy reckoned more on, in the house opposite, for sound calculations, safe conduct, and the sure balance-sheet.

And this sketch is given of him, not that he is to figure any further in our story, but only lest the curious reader should be desirous to know, what sort of a husband Miss Lucretia was turning her back on so unconcernedly, and so recklessly, many may think—Daddy's great wealth and favour put into the scale—for the sake of a good-looking, may be, but poor, portionless lieutenant, in his Majesty's 46th.

The parting of the sisters was, at least, decorous, if nothing more, and Betty took

great praise to herself for the line of conduct she had pursued. In one sense, neither was sorry for the separation. In truth, it was a great relief to both. Betty saw her advantage in it with her father ; and poor Lucretia was removed from a tyranny which had become almost insupportable.

The load at her heart that weighed heaviest, was the thought of what Fred would feel when he found she was gone. They had purposely kept her ignorant of her journey till the last moment, and she had racked her brain in vain for some mode of sending a line or message to him, or to Sophy, to say farewell. Even then, she knew nothing of her destination ; and, unless she could make a friend and confidant of Andrew, on the way, there seemed no hope but in Fred's own love and determination, to trace her, and find her out, convey her where they might.

This thought buoyed her up ; and Mr. Plover was " overjoyed to find with what

sweet Christian meekness and cheerfulness she bore the journey."

But Andrew, though all kindness, gave her no opportunity to talk with him alone ; and, even had he done so, her generosity shrunk from the fear of involving him perhaps in some trouble with Daddy, for her own selfish ends ; so that—the moment at last came to say good-bye—she exchanged heartfelt kisses with him in silence ; for, had she trusted her voice at all, there was one name struggling for utterance on her lips must have been spoken ; and, merely whispering—" if you see her, give my love, will you, to dear Sophy ?" by the assuring token of that farewell grasp, knew well that he would ;—and, nothing further to say to Mr. Plover but again, " good, bye"—" good-bye, my child, he repeated, good-bye ; and squeezing the Fairfax's hand, muttered something about " bless you !" and departed.

Something like a tear stood in Grace Fairfax's eye, or Lucretia thought so, as

taking her sweet charge by the hand:—"you are my own dear child now," she said, kissing her—"you must now look on me, remember, as a mother."

Going back to his brother Jonas's, Mr. Plover dropped in at the Fancy Bazaar, to purchase a little souvenir or two to take home with him. Andrew was delighted! and, determined to invest half-a-crown, bought an ivory tooth-pick for Daddy, a memorandum-book for Tim, and a needle-case, with, A PRESENT FROM BEYMOUTH, on it in gold letters, for sister Betty. Another threepence was wanted—they came to two shillings and ninepence altogether. Andrew tried hard for the odd coppers; but "no abatement could be made;"—when, thinking of Molly, he fidgetted in his pocket for a minute; and, at last drawing out another sixpence, and holding the half-crown tight back, bargained, for a gilt thimble for her that took his fancy. For ten minutes at least there was no knowing how

it was to end—Mr. Plover looked at his watch—and Andrew at the new, bright piece, glittering in his palm. “You shall have them,” said the woman by the counter, at a look from Mr. Plover; and, pocketing his prizes, off went Andrew, chuckling and capering with delight! his reverend friend not thinking it at all necessary to damp it by any disclosures as to the real pocket that had paid the piper for his dancing.

Andred looked at his purchases a dozen times going home. Betty’s, with the gold PRESENT FROM BEYMOUTH, pleased him most, and he kept drawing it forth from his breast-pocket every chance, and regaling himself on the idea, “how her eyes would sparkle at it!” till, coming within sight of the old church-steeple from the hill-top, he replaced it all safe as before; and, glad enough to get back, leaped from the chaise as it entered Hillborough; and, preferring to take the short cut home, across by “The Chequers,” as the vicarage lay a good

quarter of a mile out of the way, wished the vicar good night ; and, merely stopping a moment as he came by the wharf to flack the dust from his coat and trousers, and put himself in fit trim, — in less than five minutes afterwards was shaking Molly lustily by the hand, and taking a drink of small beer, before he went in to Daddy.

The first greetings over, and supper laid, Andrew thought of his presents ; and, drawing them out, one after the other : — “ Confusion ! — where was the one for Betty ? No — there, then — it was gone — and he’d be sworn, he had it, with the others, safe in his pocket, when they got to the hill-top.”

Betty was inconsolable. “ He must have drawn it out with his handkerchief, and dropped it in the road ? ”

“ How could that be ? After he last felt it safe, he never took out his handkerchief at all till he came to wharf-side.”

“ Sure ? Then, there it must be, if nobody had picked it up. Come day-break,

Molly should set Mike Crossby to go and look for it."

"Day-break? No—Andrew would run back at once and see himself. It wouldn't take him ten minutes."

And Andrew did, with lantern in hand, pace up and down, retracing every step nearly to the hill-foot, for upwards of an hour; but without success. The "Present from Beymouth" was gone; and, worse luck, Betty's expectant joy, too, and, worst of all, every wink of sleep that night from Andrew's pillow.

But Lucretia was safely lodged out of harm's way, which was a comfort to Daddy, and where a sharp eye would be kept over her; and now they should have a quiet house; and, if James Hoxton was of the same mind by-and-bye, when the young scape-grace was packed off to Malta, no need to be spending the money at Beymouth; better in their pockets a great deal, to go to house-keeping. Have her home?

yes—and get 'em married, and have done with it. Soldier? no, never!—he'd rather follow her to the grave first."

Why Geoffry hated a red-coat so, more than one reason explained. By the old colonel, his wife's father, he had lost a good four thousand pounds, a large sum to lose, as well as to gain, in Daddy's eyes. He never got over that mortgage. Then, son Timothy was drawn for the Militia, at a time when men were scarce, and, being reputed rich, he had to give twenty pounds to procure a substitute. Furthermore, although, like his father and grandfather before him, he owed a vast deal of his wealth, at one time or other, to the wars, he had once suffered severely by a government army-contract he had entered into, by which he "burnt his fingers." No one ever took a meal with Geoffry but was condemned to hear all about that luckless contract. He would keep boring on it for hours, till even Betty would get away, if

she could, when she saw it coming. Added to all which, he had once been induced, sorely pressed, to lend a poor widow-relation a hundred and twenty pounds, to help fit her boy out for Madras ; not a sixpence of which—as he died out there, and she of grief at home—had he ever got back, and this had filled full his cup of bitterness. In short, Daddy's heart was bitterly set against the military. The sight of one of them coming up street would drive him any time from his door ; and it is greatly to be doubted, whether, had Lord Wellesley himself come and asked him for daughter's hand of his, he would have easily let him have it.

The cobbler Daddy looked on as a respectable person, as long as he stuck to his last, and paid his way somehow ; whereas, Daddy always associated the idea of a soldier, with tenpence half-penny a-day, nothing to do but mischief, and a bloody grave, or Chelsea hospital, at the end of the

chapter. As for the officers, he pitied them more than the men. He had always heard, they padded and perfumed themselves before they went into action, couldn't shave without scented soap, nor dine on less than three courses, did little all day but loll, and lounge, and make love, smoke, swagger, and swear, and run head over ears into debt. Debt, of all things, Daddy detested; an oath never passed his lips; one suit served him a year and a half; barber Lott shaved him every day for a penny; sixpence any day would pay for his dinner; and who ever saw him idle? the thought of slaying and slaughtering always turned him cold, and the smell of tobacco as sick as a dog. Daddy, that's certain, had more respect in his heart for a hedger and ditcher than for the Commander-in-Chief; so, what chance Fred stood with him now, as Lucretia in her new far-off home trembled to think, may be easily guessed.

But it is almost time some kind inquiries were made after Mr. Frederick, who, with his poor crippled arm in a sling, was smarting acutely, body and mind, at his "ignominious overthrow."

CHAPTER VI.

" O 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love
That makes the world go round !"

FRED's fall was no joke, though, like a hero, he put the best face on it that he could, considering everything. He had dislocated his left arm, and was bruised and shaken sadly. But the deepest wound of all was in Fred's heart ; and for this, " if cousin Sophy could find no remedy, poor Fred's case was hopeless indeed."

" Only have a little patience, and you shall see," promised Sophy.

There was balm in her words ; and, resigning himself, as well as he might, to his

fate, Fred counted the hours were yet left him, before he must pack up and off, with a heart of lead ; “ and, come that, and she lost to him—see if he immortalized not his name among the slain, the first chance, and so buried his griefs, once and for ever, in a soldier’s grave.”

Sophy turned pale, his eyes rolled so, and he looked so wild and haggard ; and, drawing closer to him, and taking a hand in his — what balm for the aching-heart like woman’s sympathy ?

Back by degrees came the colour to Fred’s cheeks ; the crippled arm regained its proper form and nerve ; the doctor shook hands with it ; and now, “ only just remove the load at his heart, and who so gay and grateful on earth as he ?”

That was beyond the good doctor’s skill — “ there was but one medicine for that.”

Possibly. But it was not beyond Sophy Woodford’s.

“ Hark, foolish ! I have another little

thought in my head ;” and no sooner was it safe there, seemingly, than, with it, who should come in, too, but Phoebe Birch.

The very thing ! Of all persons on earth the one Sophy most desired to meet at that moment ;—for it had struck her, that “ Phoebe, having a niece living at the vicarage, perhaps something might be got out of her, touching the Vicar and Andrew’s six-days’ absence ?”

No, she had questioned her about it ; she was a simple, silly soul was Susan, never like any of the other Birches, and never would be.”

Sophy’s face fell.

“ But she had come to show them,” had Phoebe, “ something”—and in went her hand to the bottom of her pocket—“ something she had picked up last night by the wharf-side behind Geoffry Westminster’s, just after master Andrew had passed—it must have been about seven o’clock or half-past—she was going home from Josiah

Till's the shortest way by the Chequers—ah, yes, now she'd got it—something—he dropped it, she was certain sure, from his pocket-handkerchief — something looked suspicious-like, now didn't—it?”

Seizing the “something” which Phœbe held out to her with glistening eyes, Sophy was a little puzzled at first what to make of it; till, her eyes resting on A PRESENT FROM BEYMOUTH, a sudden thought seemed to flash on her like lightning; and, whispering elatedly to Fred, as she put her finger on the word Beymouth,—“ he has a brother, a clergyman, living there, we've got it!”—Fred's extacy was so great, if Sophy had not literally pushed Phœbe out of the room,—to go quick, and get something to eat and drink down stairs before she left—he would have committed himself most assuredly in some way; whereas then—the hero he was in Phœbe's sight was truly beautiful!

Phœbe gone, if Sophy had had any doubts

before of her cousin's affection, the consanguinical embrace he gave her then and there must have quite dispersed them.

"And now to business, please—now to put their heads together, to be a match for Betty."

"Let me see," began Sophy—"yes—there's no other way—I've got it—can you write a good hand?"

"Can you ever read it as you ought when I have written it? It depends a great deal. Pray what sort of a hand?"

"Large, and round text, and running."

Fred shook his head—"he would be sorry to deceive her."

"No? But you can draw,—shepherds and shepherdesses, and lions, and lambs, and dying gladiators, and martyrs heads, and trees, and water-falls, and dear little sleeping babies, and lap-dogs on pretty down cushions?"

"Well, I don't know. I do remember once, that's true, trying my hand, to please

my mother, at my father's hunter, Rob Roy ; and, when I went to show it him, he asked me, "what it was ? Your horse, sir. 'Horse ?' cried he—" what with all his legs on one side ? Go, write *father's horse* underneath, you blockhead ! then I shall know it."

"What's to be done ? Can you sing ?"

"Shall I favour you with a specimen ?"

"Oh my patience ! Dance, then ?"

"Dance ? Yea, by George, can't I a little ? and, springing to his feet, and catching her round the waist, off they went together round and round ; till, out of breath he dropped her on a chair, and, making a profound bow, "hoped Miss Sophy was quite satisfied ?"

"Perfectly ! It's settled, *mon cher*—the only chance—then you must be a dancing-master."

"The deuce !"

"And go and teach them their steps at Beymouth."

Up leaped Fred again, seized his darling

cousin's fair hand, and, whistling at the top of his lungs an air to match, off they went round and round again double quick time ; till, fairly exhausted, they sank each into a lounge ; and, a little recovered, laughed till the tears came, and, putting his head in at the door, appeared the doctor, "utterly scandalized at such doings at that time in the morning !"

The doctor had smarted enough already for their freaks and fancies ; had lost, most likely, not only his patients, but the thumping legacy, he was no doubt down for. He would give no further opinion. No question but that they had sent her off to Beymouth. It looked very like it ; how else could Andrew, if he had dropped it, have come by the needle-case ? But he would not be mixed up in any more of their mad schemes. Fred must please himself. He would advise him to think twice. What was the girl worth to a poor soldier like him, if her pretty face was all she brought him ? Better

go, than that, and put his head under a cart-wheel. But he did not mean to give any opinion about it. Very likely, a blow at the sea-side would do him good; and Sophy, too, if Aunt Barbara would go with her. A sniff of the salt-weed would not hurt her a bit, either, and, she loved it dearly, who did not? But mind, he would give no opinion, one way or the other—they must please themselves."

Sophy "quite understood that? And go and get pen and ink—Aunt Barbara should be written to that very moment."

Fred "would answer for her"—and off the letter went.

Of all things, Aunt Barbara loved a sniff of the salt-sea; and, the matter settled as wise folks settle matters when they mean to do it—in less than four days afterwards Aunty was sitting sniffing away to her dear old heart's content at the salt waves, as they came dashing up on the beach beneath her pretty bow-window, without a care be-

yond,—the Hillborough gossips, by a little ruse of Sophy's, thinking they were safe and snug, visiting in London.

Beymouth was a pleasant sea-side place in those days, before fashion had stamped it with the full seal of its approbation as it has done since, and drew many summer and autumn visitors, as it now draws them in crowds, for the sake of its bracing briny-breezes, broad even sands, and comfortable bathing-boxes. So, Grace Fairfax, then on the look out where to pitch her tent on the green earth with best hopes, took counsel among her friends; and, it seeming to them that Beymouth offered rare advantages for the "select establishment for young ladies" she had then in contemplation to devote her little capital and best energies to found and flourish on—there she pitched it; and far-famed and flourishing indeed was the "Select Establishment" of Mrs. Fairfax at the time we are considering!

But not only—and Geoffry rubbed his

hands at the thought—not only was Mrs. Fairfax's school very select, it was also no less strict. The very strictest surveillance in every department, compatible with the most perfect mutual confidence and concord, was the grand feature of the house. There was the never sleeping lynx-eye everywhere, yet no one ever saw it on themselves; the strong hand ever on and over all, yet so gentle and so just of rule and judgment, the biggest criminal kissed it with respect. Fairfax House rejoiced in its immunities—no breath of scandal was ever heard in or out of it; its machinery worked well; the perfect balance was preserved; its powers never faltered, and its products never failed.

Mrs. Fairfax could go to church, and so could her governess and teachers and professors; and, if the Rev. Mr. Jonas Plover ever deemed it his duty to denounce from the pulpit the carnal excesses of their neighbours, their deplorable neglect of the substance for the attainment of the shadow,

sit in their pews, cool as cucumbers—his thunders reached them not. Therein conscience pricked not Grace Fairfax. Fairfax House reigned unimpeached—and Geoffry Westminster's rest was undisturbed.

Fairfax House was a large, square, brick-built, stucco-fronted, edifice, of imposing aspect, with handsome portico entrance, approached on either side of an oblong turf-flat by a broad bold gravel drive, tastefully bordered with rare shrubs and evergreens. There was much characteristic propriety throughout. It seemed designed expressly for what it was now noted for, a ladies' school of the best class. The interior amply fulfilled the promises of the exterior—the accommodations were capital. All to the eye was faultless, faultless as parents and guardians could desire. In the rear were large gardens and shrubberies and pleasure grounds, uniting every requisite for substantial use, or recreation. And, when all else was exhausted, there was the

sea, and the sea views ! What heart could want more ? Perfect in, and perfect out, it was, as Mr. Plover aptly characterised it, " the embodiment, so to speak, of the *mens sana et corpus sanum*, in its fullest sense."

Professors in those days were not as plentiful as blackberries, nor anything like it. Now they grow much thicker. With all its colossal strides, they fairly outstrip poor intellect. It cannot keep pace with them. Frightened, perhaps, at their programmes, it thinks of its poor brain—what mortal head can possibly hold them all ?

Accomplishments stand a better chance. Fred boasted of his quadrilles, his vales, country-dances, and De Coverley's. O ye Gods ! what would he have had to say now, with his *les tempêtes mazurkas*, *polkas*, *deux-temps*, *schottiches*, and gallops ?

Sophy was pleased to think, that Fred was a proficient in what he did know. He danced well, like a gentleman, with finished ease and elegance, knew what to do with

his arms as well as his legs ; and, if Sophy was right, might set up anywhere and, for true grace, beat half the dancing masters.

Now, it so happened at this time that Mrs. Fairfax was rather puzzled about one thing—how to keep dancing-pace, as she could wish, with the spirit of the times at Bymouth. The thought caused her some wakeful nights. She had Sir Digby Horsham's daughter, of "The Cedars," a baronet, whose patronage she highly valued ; two younger daughters of General Brettleton, a magistrate ; the pet niece of Mr. Redmond Rock, the banker ; and now Miss Lucretia Westminster, youngest child of the rich Westminsters, of Hillborough. Her terms were liberal, and she must maintain her title to them. Mr. Rock was particularly anxious about Miss Rock's figure and deportment. Living always in a country town, they had been sadly neglected ; and, as she would be sure to ride in her carriage, with the views he had for her,

she must be taught to step into it like a lady, when she had got it. For her head he had no fears. Like her mother, she was a surprising child!—before she was sixteen she had read every book of interest in Miss Stork's library; and that was how it was her figure suffered so—poring over her books. For his part, Mr. Rock was not an advocate for so much head-piece in a woman. It was the dancing-master she wanted most now, and the dancing master she must have."

The Fairfax pondered it in her mind:—"she must—she should! Her dancing department admitted of improvement—that she acknowledged to herself—and it should be made! Mons. Belplanque was all very well; but he was too much wedded to one system—a little behind the age:—yes, she must introduce rather more vigour there—must keep pace with the times," she saw.

With the bow-window thrown open, and at a little round table, covered with the

breakfast equipage, drawn up to it, sat, on the sunny, smiling morning we have our eye on, three as happy faces as were to be found in Beymouth ; just then all fun and enjoyment over their shrimps, and a long letter from the doctor—to say, among other things, “ Phœbe had been there, and, sure enough, it was Andrew had dropped the needle-case ; for Miss Betty had set Mike Crossby to look about for it next morning ; and Mike had told somebody, and somebody had told somebody else, and somebody else had told her ; and, so, there was no doubt about it—Andrew had been to Beymouth ; and, sure as fate, there they had left Miss Lucretia, perhaps at the great school Mr. Plover was always talking so much about.”

Fred knew as much already ; and, sure of his bird, picked away, his arm strong as ever again, and, by the look of his blooming cheeks, his heart overflowing with the most perfect self-content. Aunt Barbara's eyes

had a mischievous twinkle in them, shewed she was decidedly up to something ; while Sophy, unusually demure while reading her father's letters, when she came to the part about Mike's find, burst out laughing so, the passers-by underneath looked up in groups ; when, bidding Fred stand up and put himself in the fifth position—again came such a roar, Aunty was obliged to shut the window down, to prevent a crowd collecting.

Fred a dancing-master ! 'faith, well they might roar !

“ O, 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love”—

Yes, and Sophy was resolved it should now serve them a better turn than only turning “ the world round ”—what was that ? And, the fifth position perfect, down they sat again to make perfect also the needful steps to that important end.

But what ever made it enter Sophy's head to metamorphose Lieutenant Frederick

Woodford, of all persons, into a dancing-master ?

It is difficult to concieve, how strange ideas, and often very correct ones, do enter people's heads. No sooner did the " Present from Beymouth " turn up, than Sophy " saw it all as clear," she said, " as Fred's sad and solemn phiz. Had not Mr. Plover a clergyman-brother living at Beymouth ? Had she not heard him many times talk of his visits there ? and of his niece, Olivia Gertrude Mauds ? and " how well she was getting on with her French, and music, and drawing, at Mrs. Fairfax's ? but what a pity it was, every one said, Grace Fairfax hadn't a better dancing-master, to teach them the last fashionable figures, and give them lessons in the calisthenics ? Yes ; and was there a shadow of a doubt, that poor Lu was then at Fairfax House, as sure as her name was Sophy ? Yes ; and the lynx-eye, and the light hand, hadn't she often heard of them, too ? Stay—yes—she had got it—

do nothing else, he could dance, couldn't he?—Come along, then—

“ O, 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love !”

“ Only get Aunt Barbara with them—and step out as should be—and she would show them soon what love could do !”

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE LAUGHS AT LOCKSMITHS.

THE little clock-tower of Beymouth old Church in the pretty picture over Aunt Barbara's head chimed eleven. It tallied with her watch to a moment, for she had set it by it only the night before; and, brushing the crumbs from her lap, she walked out on to the balcony; and, the fresh sniff irresistible, put on her cloak and "ugly;" and, as Fred and Sophy had some pressing affair on hand would take them to the other end of the town, sallied out for a solitary ramble along the beach—if she

chanced not to meet anyone liked a chair on the sands and a little chit-chat better.

It was a bright, breezy, morning, with a cloudless sky overhead; just the sort of September morning, when, all the world but oneself out of town, one longs for wings to drop one, either just where Aunt Barbara was, laving her feet with the blue brine, or, with Joe Mauton on arm, and Ponto a-head, among the thick stubbles and turnips of old Wiltshire.

Much of the same mind, no doubt, on the bright morning before us, all the Fairfax young ladies were out walking with the head teachers, a mile or so past the jetty, getting fresh roses for their cheeks, and appetites for their dinner; when Fred and Sophy, having reached near Fairfax House, saw the long file in the distance, wending its way along the slopes towards the more open country.

Fred strained his gaze hard to make out, if he could, the only form that for him had

any charm just then; but in vain—the Fairfax young ladies were in uniform, the sun danced on the waters, on which danced the little boats, everything was dancing, dancing for joy,—and, dazzled, he shaded his brows with his hand,—till a faultless figure catching his eye—“*must* be her’s—he was sure it must,”—his own heart danced, too, in concert at such a rate, that it was as much as Sophy could do to restrain him from setting off at the top of his speed, and dashing all his hopes for ever.

Dragging him away; a circuit of some fifteen hundred yards, round the esplanade, brought them in sight of Fairfax House; when, without more ado, Sophy pulled lustily at the bell; and, anon a staid matronly servant appearing, put cards, with Captain and Mrs. Watermark, Woodbridge House, on them, into her hand; and, Mrs. Fairfax being at home, the next minute they were occupying a crimson

go, than that, and put his head under a cart-wheel. But he did not mean to give any opinion about it. Very likely, a blow at the sea-side would do him good; and Sophy, too, if Aunt Barbara would go with her. A sniff of the salt-weed would not hurt her a bit, either, and, she loved it dearly, who did not? But mind, he would give no opinion, one way or the other—they must please themselves."

Sophy "quite understood that? And go and get pen and ink—Aunt Barbara should be written to that very moment."

Fred "would answer for her"—and off the letter went.

Of all things, Aunt Barbara loved a sniff of the salt-sea; and, the matter settled as wise folks settle matters when they mean to do it—in less than four days afterwards Auntie was sitting sniffing away to her dear old heart's content at the salt waves, as they came dashing up on the beach beneath her pretty bow-window, without a care be-

"Must be particularly healthy, I should imagine?" went on Fred.

"Is it your first visit to Beymoth?" asked the Fairfax.

"For many years—yes."

"You see great alterations then?"

"It seems greatly improved!"

"I believe," put in Sophy, "you have a daughter of Sir Digby Horsham with you at present?"

"Yes, and a sweet, intelligent girl she is. We are very proud of her! That"—pointing to a group of crayons over the mantel-piece—"is one of her drawings."

Fred was amazed! "What talent!"

"And two of General Brittleton's, we hear?"

Another and more gracious smile.

"We have taken the liberty," continued Sophy, "to call this morning—we fear at rather an inconvenient time, so early"—

"Not at all."

“To inquire whether you have a vacancy at present for a parlour pupil; and, if so, to ask the favour of one of your prospectuses?”

Turning to a table at her elbow, without replying to the question, the Fairfax took two of the required documents from a side drawer, and, presenting one, with much grace, to each of her visitors, resumed her seat, watching with evident satisfaction their gratified looks and observations to each other as they read them over—“for some friend or relative most likely,” she said to herself.

“And these terms are *inclusive*?” inquired Fred.

“Except for certain *extras*, as specified, if required.”

“Oh yes—yes—I see. For my own part—for my own part”—and Fred again ran his eye over the paper—“I cannot conceive what more than this can possibly be required.”

"Well, my great aim," returned the Fairfax, kindling, "has been to keep pace as much as possible, as much as my opportunities permitted, with the rapid progress of the age—to spare no trouble or expense to make my establishment, for its size and design, I hope I may be allowed to say, second to none in England."

"That we have heard everywhere," assented Sophy.

"Everywhere," echoed Fred.

"And," pursued the Fairfax, "not only as complete, but as select as possible."

"That is a great point—a very great point!" agreed Fred. "On the continent they may do it somehow—huddle all sorts together without distinction; but in England that sort of thing won't do at all."

"Impossible!"

"Grades must be preserved. It is different with our great public schools for boys—it can't be avoided with them; but there they find their levels. Faith, your

had a mischievous twinkle in them, shewed she was decidedly up to something ; while Sophy, unusually demure while reading her father's letters, when she came to the part about Mike's find, burst out laughing so, the passers-by underneath looked up in groups ; when, bidding Fred stand up and put himself in the fifth position—again came such a roar, Aunty was obliged to shut the window down, to prevent a crowd collecting.

Fred a dancing-master ! 'faith, well they might roar !

“ O, 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love”—

Yes, and Sophy was resolved it should now serve them a better turn than only turning “ the world round ”—what was that ? And, the fifth position perfect, down they sat again to make perfect also the needful steps to that important end.

But what ever made it enter Sophy's head to metamorphose Lieutenant Frederick

Woodford, of all persons, into a dancing-master ?

It is difficult to conceive, how strange ideas, and often very correct ones, do enter people's heads. No sooner did the "Present from Beymouth" turn up, than Sophy "saw it all as clear," she said, "as Fred's sad and solemn phiz. Had not Mr. Plover a clergyman-brother living at Beymouth? Had she not heard him many times talk of his visits there? and of his niece, Olivia Gertrude Maudo? and "how well she was getting on with her French, and music, and drawing, at Mrs. Fairfax's? but what a pity it was, every one said, Grace Fairfax hadn't a better dancing-master, to teach them the last fashionable figures, and give them lessons in the calisthenics? Yes; and was there a shadow of a doubt, that poor Lu was then at Fairfax House, as sure as her name was Sophy? Yes; and the lynx-eye, and the light hand, hadn't she often heard of them, too? Stay—yes—she had got it—

advantage, and shall be, in our dancing classes ere long."

"The new cotillons, now all in vogue, are extremely pretty, don't you think so?" asked Fred.

"So I have heard. I spoke to Monsieur Belplanque this morning about them. And are danced at the palace, I believe?"

"Always."

"And not difficult?"

"On the contrary—I learnt them perfectly in three lessons."

"Indeed! I should like exceedingly to see them danced here!"

Fred exchanged a word or two apart with Sophy.

"We think that might be very easily managed, if you would permit it," smiled Sophy, "and you thought Monsieur Belplanque would not take it as impertinent of us. The Captain proposes, that we should do ourselves the pleasure of waiting on him, and seeing if a class could not be got up, after a fashion, by Saturday."

"That is very kind of you indeed! I cannot conceive any objection, if Monsieur Belplanque has none. But you know how—how sensitive he is!"

"As all men of talent are, fond of their art, Frenchmen especially," accorded Fred. "Want right-handling, that's all. We can try at all events. Is he likely to be at home this morning?"

"Till one always. Whether or no, I may reckon on the pleasure of seeing you there on Saturday?"

"Most certainly."

"Are you staying near us?"

"At Stonecliff Cottage."

"So far?"

"A nice healthy walk, in and out."

"True. And honest, decent folks, the Thorpes as any about us; and a charming bow-window!"

"By the bye—the prospectuses?" recollected Fred, returning from the hall for them;—and, hands shaken, and mutual

assurances of great pleasure and gratification, &c., &c., &c., exchanged :—" thank Heaven for all its mercies !" exclaimed Fred, catching a glimpse of the blue waves, and taking a deep breath—" call me a bad general, eh ? Come along—didn't I do that well about the *compounds*, and *cotillons* ?" Now, then, for the grand master-stroke—to tickle the Frenchman, too, to the top of his bent."

Less than ten minutes walk brought them to King's Parade.

Yes, Monsieur Belplanque was at home.

Had they been two minutes later, they would have missed him ; for there, as they entered the passage, he stood bowing, with his hat in his hand, just going out for a promenade.

" Is it quite convenient to spare us ten minutes ?" asked Sophy, with one of her sweetest smiles.

" Si, si, Mademoiselle—pardon"—looking at the card—" Madame, pardon—yes, twenty."

“ You have a charming residence !—Ah ! and a superb saloon, that it is, for dancing !”

Monsieur flattered himself, the old town could not show the like ; and, gracefully motioning to a seat, was entirely and devotedly at Mademoiselle’s service.

Putting the Fairfax card in his hand, and pointing his toes, Fred declared, the floor looking so tempting, he could hardly resist taking a turn all by himself.”

“ Ah ! vraiment ? Monsieur le Capitaine is fond of dancing ?”

“ Next to hunting, loves it to distraction !”

“ Bravo ! A noble exercise ! and Monsieur’s little sparkling brown eyes told the captain better than any words, how immensely he respected him !”

“ And Madame ?”

“ Adores it !”

“ Mon dieu ! then the world’s not coming to an end just yet, that’s certain.”

“ While Monsieur lives to adorn it, it is to

be greatly hoped not," returned Sophy. "But our visit this morning must be"—looking at Fred—"or Monsieur's, kind patience will be exhausted."

"We are anticipating a great treat on Saturday," said Fred.

"Ah, vraiment—some *fête* ?—ah, indeed! I have not heard of it."

"But we have," smiled Sophy, "this very morning—the grand *fête* of the Fairfax *belles*, to come off on Saturday, in Monsieur Belplanque's Grand Saloon."

"Mon dieu ! c'est cela—oui, oui ! And Monsieur le Capitaine and Madame will do me the honour to grace it with their presence ?"

"If quite agreeable to Monsieur, we fully purpose to avail ourselves of Mrs. Fairfax's pressing invitation also," replied Sophy, "and to do *ourselves* the honour."

"I am enchanted !"

"We could not have desired anything more delightful !"

"All the best sets will be danced."

"Do you think the last new cotillons pretty?" asked Fred.

"*Assez bien*—pretty well—passable—so, so—does Madame admire them?"

"Exceedingly! I think they are so graceful!"

"And so easily learnt," added Fred.

Monsieur looked thoughtful for a moment. "I had intended to introduce them at our grand winter ball; by when I thought the public approbation would be better known."

"They are danced now universally at the Palace," observed Fred.

"Is that so?"

"Unquestionably."

"There is no difficulty about it, that I can see, in that case," accorded Monsieur, after an instant's reflection; "that is, if my excellent friend and patroness, Madame Fairfax, see none."

"I think I can vouch for that, then,"

smiled Sophy. "Indeed, we come, I fancy, in some sort almost pledged this morning, to make a little proposition about them with her full sanction, if it meet with yours."

"Mon dieu! mine is given before asked. Madame Fairfax's wishes are law here"—and Monsieur pressed his right hand on his left breast.

"The Captain thought, with your approbation and assistance, a few lessons might make us tolerably perfect by Saturday, and be an agreeable surprise for Fairfax House."

"By Saturday?"

"Yes, easily," Fred exclaimed. "If Monsieur will only wield his bow, the thing is done!"

"Ah!—bow—c'est drole—how funny! Does Madame suppose it possible?"

"With the mere flourish of Monsieur's bow—a thing accomplished."

"Will Madame, all the same, have the goodness to show him how?"

"Voilà! Thus—here is the Fairfax sign

manual to the act—here the grand saloon—there demoiselles in dozens—here the new pupil”—pointing to Fred—“perfect at all points—and here, chief of all, the great magic master-hand,—what more is wanting?”

“Madame would rule the stars. Madame, *c’est une affaire terminée*—so be it—the thing is settled.”

“Let’s see, then,” said Fred, jumping up in high glee; “we have yet three whole days left—as good as twenty with such chances. Ah! *malheureusement!*—it may not be possible, with his other numerous engagements, for Monsieur to give us the first lesson this afternoon?”

Monsieur consulted his tablets. “Will it be convenient to Madame to attend?”

“At what hour?”

“Will half-past four be agreeable?”

“Perfectly.”

“Bon! Then I will make a point of so

settling it with the young ladies— at half-past four this afternoon.”

“ How kind—how very kind !” and, extending her little primrose’d fingers, and raising her eyes to his, with an expression more convincing than a thousand volumes, Sophy left them there for a moment ; then, adjusting her veil, gave him such another irresistible look at parting, that off started Monsieur that moment to Fairfax House ; and threw the whole school into such a state of excitement with the treat in store for them, that anything like proper attention to lessons that afternoon was entirely out of the question ; and, per force, giving a half holiday, the Fairfax committed them to the care of the head governess, and, owing some friendly visits, went out to pay them.

As for Fred, his state of delight at the success of their scheme was so exuberant, that it required all Sophy’s cooler judgment

to get him safe back to Stonecliff like a rational being. Lucky for him he had such a mentor at his elbow, or most assuredly he would have made a wreck of all his hopes at the moment of fruition.

Aunt Barbara, like the doctor, "would know nothing of their 'mad caps.' What she saw of folly all around her, every hour, with her own eyes, was more than what was good for them. Please not to try them any more with any of their ridiculousness. She had been looking, turn where she would, at little more than foolishness, whether she would or not, all her days. She was getting older now, and wanted rest. Would *they* be kind enough to let her have it?"

"Undoubtedly; and would send her in the last new novel from Tidcat's."

That was out, and the names down for it something quite hopeless; so, they started her off vol. i. of "The Poppy Wreath for Pining Hearts" just out, by the Rev. Jonas Plover, and highly recommended! and,

when they got back, there she was, dear, kind soul ! fast asleep on the sofa, with the "Poppy Wreath" by her side—evidently, under its soothing influences, enjoying it exceedingly.

Now, it would ill become the grave design of this story, to dwell at length on what the veriest tyro at tale-telling, who may chance to read these pages, will have anticipated without another sentence ; and, moreover, on all scores—interesting however that result might be to Mr. Frederick and Miss Sophy—there are other guess sort of good folks to be thought of, and whose approval is indispensable to the end, besides young misses and masters of Fred and Sophy's turn of thinking :—so, what I have further to record of their "mad-caps," as forming an essential link in this their history, shall be dismissed here in a very few words ; though my sweet misses and masters, in their wrathful teens, may pitch me into

the corner, as out of all rule and order, and, worse still, out of their good books entirely.

Well, then—of course, Fred and Sophy took care to be at the Grand Salon de Belplanque a good half-hour before the Fairfax *belles* arrived ; of course, Fred's state of exultant joy and expectation had more than once nearly defeated all Sophy's plans ; of course, the self-command evinced by Sophy, on the entrance of Lucretia, and when their eyes first met, was a study for the stage ; of course, Lucretia's own state of feelings—seeing in an instant as she did that they must be utter strangers to each other—may be better conceived than depicted ; of course, though every drop of blood rushed from her face to her heart, and a feather would have almost knocked her down, on Monsieur throwing open the window, she got better, and went through the lesson wonderfully ! Of course, all were delighted. Of course, at that same hour next day they were to re-assemble. Of course,

eharmed enough was Monsieur at the thought of, and how pleased the Fairfax would be sure to be! of course, before they separated, and Sophy shook hands all round, Lucretia grasped something tight in her palm, that, the next moment she had thrust into her bosom; of course, two hearts at least among them thought to-morrow would never come; of course, it did come—and next day—and of the next;—and then, with it, the Fairfax herself—and the GRAND VICTOIRE, to crown all!

Of course, the Fairfax *was* well pleased, and full of thanks and praise—Monsieur in raptures! Of course, it was a great success! and Fred wore his laurel-wreath as true heroes only wear them. Of course, he knew how to spell *opportunity* as well as Sophy; of course, daily passed the bosom-signals to and fro; of course it was all settled—the time and place, without a word of mouth exchanged. Of course, the moon hid her face that night; of course, Fred

was an hour or more too soon ; of course, he cursed the creeping clocks ; of course eight struck at last ; of course poor Lucretia had carried such livid cheeks all that afternoon, twice the head governess insisted she must be ill, and would have her go and lie down ; of course, that freed her from her companions. Of course, when there is the will there is the way ; of course, more dead than alive, she reached the rendezvous ; found Fred safe enough there—quick as thought was lifted by him up the rope-ladder—was landed safely on the other side of the wall—was borne rapidly along for some two hundred yards—popped into a close travelling-chariot beside her own darling Sophy—and off,—of course, on—on—on they dashed, up hill and down dale—on, on ;—on, till ratling into Harley Street, before the lark at Hillborough had greeted the new morn, she fell with a great flood of tears into Aunt Barbara's arms ; who looked terribly sleepy and pulled, as if she had

been sitting up all night. Of course, with all speed were married; sent a penitance letter, would have melted a heart of stone, to Daddy; of course, were cast adrift by him:—but, as Fred truly said “if he didn’t relent after a bit, and forgive them, which there was no doubt but he would—see, and wasn’t that some comfort—see, how they had spited that treacherous tabby, Betty?”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HONEYMOON.

Yes, spited with a vengeance was sister Betty, and, take on before Daddy as she might, finely chuckled Betty at the thought of it.

The effect of the intelligence from Beymouth of Lucretia's elopement on her father, was, at first, to stun him as with a sudden blow ; and for nearly the whole of the day it seemed as if a sort of heavy stupor had come over him, and steeped his faculties in a confused dream. Then, as the evening closed in, and, with the candles and supper, they all met together after the

day's work, he rallied a little; and, Tim drawing him out, a tear, Betty thought, struggled in his eye; but, if so, it was gone as soon as there, and with it the last semblance of feeling he ever from that hour to his death suffered himself to show for his erring child.

Love had little to do with that struggling tear. That miser-heart felt the blow, not of crushed hopes, of cruelly severed affections, of loving heart riven from loving, of fond father's heart from fond child's, or child's from father's,—it was stunned by astonishment, and in pure vexation wept for itself alone.

In all the history of his house, and he knew it by heart, filial disobedience had never once been laid to the charge of a Westminster. Such a thing as a son so much as questioning the authority of his parent was unknown among them; but for a daughter to have ever dared to set her father at defiance—"had he, Geoffry, indeed

lived to see that day? Yes—and, by the souls of his ancestors! he would act under it as they, one and all, would have done. Away tears on one side or the other; flowed they like rivers, they should never wash away the memory of that deed done, which had brought reproach and scandal on his name, till now had been ever free from blot or blemish.”

Betty's handkerchief was at her eyes. She held the penitent letter on her lap:—
“Lucretia was, still, his child.”

Tim sat gloomily biting his thumb-nail, every now and then casting an eye up, first at one, then at the other, but saying nothing; while Andrew, with a sad look, kept his gaze fixed on the carpet, fearful to encounter Daddy's face, it was so terrible!

A sob escaped Betty.

With a sudden start, Daddy snatched the letter from her lap, and, taking it to the window, stern as iron, polished his spectacles with his pocket-handkerchief.—put them on

without the visible emotion of a muscle—and, fixing his eye intently on his work, read from beginning to end in solemn silence,—Andrew's flesh creeping the while for what was coming, and Betty narrowly watching him through her fingers, ready to act, or otherwise, as circumstances called for.

But not a word nor gesture of any kind escaped him. Calmly doubling up the letter again, he tossed it on the table, and, calling Tim after him, strode out of the room, to Andrew's great relief.

Quick as thought, Betty thrust her handkerchief into her pocket, and, following him to his bed-chamber, threw herself at his knees, and, clinging to them, for a minute could not speak for the grief that choked her.

But Daddy was immovable.

“Oh, it will break my heart—it will—it will—cruel, cruel girl!” and she sobbed aloud.

Still, Daddy heeded not.

"Where, where can her heart have been? With such a home—such a father—such—such kind and affectionate brothers—and—and"—

Daddy stamped with impatience.

"But she is young, poor child!—very young—and thoughtless—and led away—else she never could have done it—she is your own flesh and blood—for her mother's sake—"

"She would have suffered death before *she* would have done the like. Go—go—as she has made her bed, so she shall lie—by heaven, she shall!"

Betty's sobs came thicker and thicker.

Pushing her from him, with the froth on his lip, Geoffry bade her leave him.

"Not till you have said that I may, at least, write to her:—that I must—that I *will* do, if you kill me for it."

"Do it, then—do it—to tell her, once for all, she shall never darken my doors more, so help me heaven!"

Heart-broken, Betty turned away, and, gaining her own room, sat down on the bed foot, to arrange her hair, and collect her scattered thoughts. There was yet a good hour and a half before bed time; and, taking pen and paper, she employed it, as Tim and Andrew had shut themselves in for the night, in relieving her breast as follows:—

“ Hillborough, &c., &c.

“ My still dear, though cruel, Sister,

“ The bitter grief you have plunged
“ us all into at home, you can imagine better
“ than I can ever express it. Oh Lucretia!
“ where could your heart have been, to act as
“ you have done; and with such a home as
“ was yours, such a dear, kind, indulgent
“ father, and such fond, affectionate bro-
“ thers, and a sister, whatever her faults,
“ who loved you so dearly? Oh! what
“ could you have been thinking of to forsake
“ us all in this way? What my own
“ feelings are I will not dwell on. You will

“ have trouble enough to bear without any
“ reproaches from me. But your dear
“ father’s anger is terrible ! God send he
“ may see fit, after a while, to turn his
“ heart again towards you, but now he is
“ dreadfully incensed ! I have been pleading
“ hard for you all day—such a day, and
“ that’s true, I never dreamt of living to
“ see—well if it don’t bring on a fit, and
“ you have not that to lay at your door.

“ I think it my duty, to repeat to you
“ what he said, in answer to my entreaties
“ to be allowed to write to you, as it was his
“ strict command that I should do so :—
“ ‘ Yes,’ said he, ‘ do it, to tell her, once
“ for all, she shall never darken my doors
“ more, so help me, heaven !’

“ I tell you his very words, that you may
“ judge how bitter his feelings are, and not
“ without cause, I think. But may God
“ turn and soften them towards you, my
“ poor child, that is all our anxious and un-
“ ceasing prayer.

“ It is a heart-rending task is now mine,
“ betweeu duty and affection. But I shall
“ not shrink from it, least of all from
“ dutifully performing, as best I can, a
“ daughter’s, as well as a sister’s part. That
“ is my *bounden* duty, as Mr. Plover says,
“ and heaven grant me grace to do it, be
“ the trials and troubles to myself what
“ they may. Our duties are always clear,
“ my poor child, if we will only look at
“ them as we ought; and if, in this sad
“ matter, I seem less the loving sister than
“ my heart would have me be, you must
“ remember, I am a child, too, with a fond
“ and relying father’s grey hairs looking to
“ me for comfort and support, and that,
“ while he is spared us, now more than ever
“ I am called upon to make the remainder
“ of his days as free from care and pain as
“ possible.

“ In doing this, may it be for the future
“ good and happiness of us all. Rely on
“ my best endeavours; and you have no

‘ reason to doubt your brother’s love and
“ kind assistance.

“ I do not advise your writing again at
“ present, while dear father is so enraged,
“ it would do more harm than good ; but
“ hope for the best, and believe me to
“ remain

“ Your loving,

“ Though unhappy Sister,

“ Elizabeth Westminster.”

“ P.S. I enclose a county bank-note for
“ ten pounds, payable at Messrs. Prescott’s,
“ from self and Andrew, which we thought
“ would come acceptable, if you will please
“ to take it.”

Lucretia was just dressed for breakfast, when the postman’s knock, opposite Aunt Barbara’s, sent the blood from many more faces than hers in Harley Street ; and, running to the window—the time they kept him there that morning for his change was past endurance ! Off at last, he paused a

moment—cast a glance at the packet in his hand—turned to the left up the street—“No, there was nothing for her, then”—stopped short again—looked across—wheeled round—and, darting over the road—knock, knock!! and poor Lu’s heart beat so, you might have almost heard the thump, thump, thump, to the tune of it.

On the landing, she looked anxiously, as if the issue of life or death depended on it, over the balusters into the hall. What a time the servant was! “Hark!”—‘Mrs. Frederick Woodford.’—Back came the life-tide flushing her cheeks scarlet—then away again, and they were left pale as lilies.—Yes, it was a letter for her from Hillborough, and sevenpence to pay.

Fred was arranging his cravat at the glass as Lu returned with the letter in her hand; but, apparently indifferent about everything but the bow he was tying, took no notice of it, as she broke the seal with trembling hand, thinking perhaps there was

time, and to spare, for all the good news it was likely to have brought them. He could note her every gesture and movement, nevertheless, as well as his own handsome face, in the glass, and never had a bow taken him such a time to get to his liking as then. He saw that every drop of blood had forsaken her face; he saw that her eyes ran agitatedly over the paper, as if despairingly eager to come quickly to the end, and know the worst; then, he saw that she stood stock-still, as if petrified, for a moment; then, that a film seemed to be gathering before her sight, as she pressed her hand to her brows, then on her forehead as if it pained her; then, reeling, he saw her clutch the chair-back for support:—and, rushing towards her, he caught her in his arms, just in time to save her from falling to the floor; and, laying her on the bed, there she remained as he placed her, more like a corpse than a living creature, for more than two hours.

Bent over her, and chafing her cold hands between his, no mother could have watched the return to life of her heart's best treasure more anxiously than did Aunt Barbara.

"Could she but have a good cry—that would do more for her than all the doctors."

"Yes; but how get the good cry to come?"

"Speak to her," advised Aunty, "speak fondly, feelingly—press your lips to hers tenderly—again—again—encircle her neck with your arm—let her feel there is some one loves her—draw her out of herself—mingle your souls together. See—she hears, she understands you, she opens her dear eyes.—Now speak home—speak comfort—talk to the heart of its sorrows—talk to her of her father—of his love soon to return again—talk only of what her heart is full of—unburthen it of itself—nay, to the troubled heart, I tell you, talk of its troubles. There, see again—she smiles, oh, how

sweetly !—smiles on you for your pains. Then, all hope is not yet gone? No, no,—the bank-note there—the yet sure token of love—shew it her—what thoughtful affection in that! Ah, yes, she smiles again—draws you to her bosom—for are you not her own, her only comfort now?—No, no—ask it not in words—she cannot speak—her throat is full—her burning eyes fill with tears—oh luxury! the pent-up heart flows over—the poor brain is saved, thank heaven!—Yes, and now let his flow, too, in concert, fast as they would; and, then—tell her both of them—would they exchange the bliss of that moment for all the pleasures under heaven?”

“To the troubled heart talk of its troubles.” Yes, it was good and precious counsel that of Aunt Barbara’s, and well she was rewarded for it.

The good cry over, Fred led his beloved Lu down to Aunty; and never, though pale as a lily, had she looked so beautiful as she

did that day. They were all in all to each other, there was the secret. Nor, whatever she might feel, did Aunty show one symptom of jealousy, till master Fred, in his extreme uxorious devotion, forgetting to salute her cheek, as well as some one else's, going out:—"No, see if she would stand that! It was not because he was in love with his wife, he was to forget his manners, was it? She would have him remember, there was a little condition attached to that silver button she had her eye on for him:—Oh no—thank him—not now—she was not going to be coaxed over that way."

As there had been enough tears in all conscience shed that day, Aunt Barbara insisted on hearing no more of Betty's letter just then—a resolution in which Fred cordially concurred; and, so, the point next morning was, "what was best to be done about it?"

Fred, to get it over, and off their minds, would have had Lu then and there sit

down, and, in spite of Betty's prohibitions, "keep on at Daddy every other post till he did give in. Fire and fury! what had he to be ashamed of?"—and Fred took a survey of himself in the glass.—"Ashamed of, indeed!—good that of a Westminster to a Woodford!"

Lucretia advised, waiting for a week before writing again, by when perhaps his heart would be softened towards her. Her father was not like ordinary men. Things that made others feel, had no effect on him; they rather excited his scorn, for the most part, than his sympathy. It was of no use hoping to work on him through feeling.

"That infernal gold! yes, that's it," exclaimed Fred, jumping up from his chair, and straddling before the fire;—"it makes the heart no bigger than a marble, and not half as soft."

Lucretia heaved a sigh.

"Well, I'll tell you what, then," went on Fred, in a milder tone,— "suppose we

give him till Monday—that will be six days, eh?—and by then, if he don't come under, we'll pitch into him again a bit?"

A faint smile said as good as, "very well, as you think best," and Fred was satisfied.

But Betty and Andrew's bank-note—had that no balsam in it?

Strange to say—that on which Aunt Barbara seemed to build so, as a sure token, turned Lucretia cold whenever she thought of it. It was the sight of that money, far more than her father's anger and heavy resentment, that, striking like ice on her heart, paralyzed her and lay her prostrate. She thought she saw in it the door of her home for ever shut against her—her father's dread fiat, "She shall never darken my threshold more," therewith sealed and ratified beyond the power of recall. Coming from any other hand, no such thought would have occurred to her, but, from Betty, it bore a crushing significance in no other

way to be interpreted. When had she ever known her before to give away five shillings from her own pocket? It was as if to say, "farewell, we part in peace, take that, and be thankful, it is all I have to give, all you will ever have." And this seemed confirmed, when coupled with, "I do not advise your writing again at present." What other construction could she put on it? Did she not know her own sister? Oh, yes, too well! What love had she ever shown for her? What universal jealousy and hate and anger had she not daily given proofs of ever since her childhood. And now, after having offended her father beyond forgiveness, to have to look to Betty for an advocate, well might her soul sink within her; well might that piece of dirty, greasy, bank paper make her shudder; well might it strike on her heart like a death blow, none the less fatal for the cat-like purring tenderness with which the blow was dealt.

Still, it seemed only right to Fred that

some acknowledgement should be made of its receipt, or Betty might have that to add to the score of her ingratiitudes. Not that he wanted her patronage, not he; he had his pay, and a trifle in the bank, and they could rub on very well, spite of her, till he could buy a company; and as to Daddy cutting her off, that was nonsense. She had only to plead guilty, and throw herself on his mercy, and, she'd see—he'd come round after a bit, only handle him gently. So, now, then, just sit down and knock off a line or two in her best hand; and then put on her best bonnet and shawl, and they would go out and have a look at the shops.

Fred was very fond of the shops. When down about anything, nothing screwed him up again better than a turn in the Malls, There care never showed its face, or, if it did, it was in a guise, its bosom-friend would never know it in. Fred's pay and the little "overs" had kept him pretty square hitherto at his tailors, mercers,

boot-makers, &c., &c., &c., &c.; and, with that £350, now about, in the three-and-a-half per cents, he could walk out bold as a lion. "nobody could hurt him."

And there is a great deal in the sort of wife a man, especially of Fred's turn, has got on his arm. He felt so safe with his Lu. She neutralized in such a sure and sweet way all his little excesses; combining with him; and co-operating, so judiciously and tenderly, that the new compound was the most natural and proper thing in the world; and, forming such an essential part as he did in it himself, well he might be proud of himself, which was the great secret of it all.

What a treasure is a sweet even temper! when coupled with good sense, what price too high for it? As far as beauty went, Fred's eyes—and they were connoisseurs—knew but one perfect woman. For a blonde, Lucretia need fear few rivals in any eyes; for superiority of mind and manners

to nineteen out of twenty of her sex, none —albeit with sometimes too full a heart, they said ;—none, for active amiability, for right thinking, too, and steady purpose, for patient efforts, and perseverance, and cheerful resignation under all troubles to the Will Supreme ; for love of simple tastes, and innocent enjoyments, and truth, and singleness of heart, and earnest, healthful piety, and fervent zeal in the Great Work, had been her mother's chief care and concern to make all paramount in her sight, from the first moment the powers of vision were given her to discern its blessed duties, and to do them—none.

With such a wife on his arm, Fred might well feel proud, and tread out boldly, and plume himself on his good fortune, though she had not brought him a shilling. What of that ? With such a little Mentor at his elbow, it was as good as a full captaincy ; “Go out shopping ? yes, I should think so,” said Aunty. “Yes, and bring home the

little bargains, and never sleep a wink the less for them."

But now listen to her:—"As Fred's leave would soon be over, he must spend the honeymoon as he ought, and take Lu to see the sights."

"It was very kind of dear Aunty; but, indeed, Lu cared not a pin for them all."

"Stuff and nonsense—cobwebs—go she must, and should!"

Sight-seeing is so entirely a matter of taste. Just then Lucretia thought it the greatest bore imaginable. But Aunty had decided it—see "the lions" she must, and should; and, there being a new opera to come off that night—"to the opera they must go, and bring Aunty home all the new favourite airs."

To the opera they went. They had to pay a guinea to get into the pit, and poor Lu's dress was crushed and disfigured sadly; but it was "*The Opera*," Fred explained to her, and, so, she must not mind it.

Lucretia gazed around her amazed. It was the first time in her life she had ever been inside a theatre, except when Andrew took her once to see Richardson's "Robber of the Rhine," at Hillborough old fair. That was a gorgeous sight ! and Lucretia could never forget it ; but this of His Majesty's Theatre was quite different, and it puzzled her rather to realise at first all the expectations Fred's vivid colouring had filled her mind with. She was not, altogether, disappointed, but she was not much pleased ; it exceeded rather than fell short of her picture to herself ; but there was a something wanting, that something which it was not within the compass of art just then to supply her ; she looked about with far more wonder than delight ; for some minutes astonishment almost took away her breath ; there was a sense of actual oppression in that monster-house, an air she would have gladly escaped from. Richardson's, nearly stifled her ; now her gaze wan-

dered wonderingly from one object to the other ;—till, resting on the box just above them—there was a pale, pointed-faced, arched-nose, slightly grey-haired man, of tall stature and noble bearing, with a glass to his eye, narrowly observing her—in features the very image of her father.

A cold chill crept over her, with a faint sickening feeling, made her grasp Fred's wrist at the moment.

Fred, looking up, and following her eyes to the lunette, drew her away. "It was the Marquis of Hardencore, a famous virtuoso, and one of the greatest and richest *roués* of the day.

"How like my dear father, is he not?"

Fred felt relieved. "Yes, about the nose and forehead, a little. Better not seem to notice him, though ;"—and, the curtain rising, Fred had soon forgotten all about it.

Not so Lucretia. That face, to her imagination the image of her father—just over her—looking searchingly down on her—

seeming to be watching her every movement, haunted her like a spectre. An opera, that had immortalized its composer, passed before her but as a pretty pageant; music, worthy of all time, and which was throwing all hearts into raptures, she scarcely heard a note of; scenic triumphs, dresses, and decorations, unsurpassed, might have been worthless daubs, and tinsel, and tinsel, for all Lu cared about them;—"what were they to her just then—and her father's stern, cold, accusing eye, there over her, piercing her very soul?—mere dumb-shows, and shallow-shams, that made her heart sick. Formed they any, the least, part of her heart's sole object? Could she separate herself an instant from that one thought? Spoke they so much as one word of the lost home, perhaps never to be regained? Would they greet her waking thoughts next morning with a smile?"

And, the far more sickening ballet over at last, who shall picture in due colours the

relief she felt, when, the pennyworth had for their penny, in rushed the slaves of pleasure, to put out the lights, and get home to their garrets, and Lucretia, the breath of heaven fanning her cheek, had escaped from that earnest gaze which had never quitted her all the evening. Oh, it was like a sudden transition from death to a new life ! And when Fred told her, that the Marquis of Hardencore paid at least £300 a-year for his box, poor Lu actually laughed out loud—the first time since Betty's letter that Fred had seen so much as a smile even on her face.

Hadn't dear Aunty got a delicious little supper ready for them when they came home ? Yes, and lucky for Lucretia, she, Aunt Barbara, was in the dark, as to the slender appreciation, apparently, that kind and welcoming hearth had found in Lu's thoughts, absorbed in the far-off home, all that evening at the opera. But she made it up, somehow, with her own conscience

before wishing good-night ; and, as Auntie was perfectly satisfied, we suppose it was only one of those little debts of love sometimes deferred, but paid at last in full, and with interest, too, good interest, there's no doubt of it.

Like operas or not, the honeymoon was not over, and the sight-seeing should go on. So, next day, it was to be the Tower. And there Fred showed her such wonders, such deathless deeds done, and dark doings to be atoned for, such blood-stained records and memorials of atrocity, that made her blush almost to call herself an Englishwoman. And when he told her at what price England prized them, poor Lu shuddered, and "thought the Kings and Queens of those times were very wicked people !"

Then, returning, he would show her the world—London's great world—and all its glories, from the top of St. Paul's. And when he pointed to the huge heaving mass beneath—before another century to be all

swept from the face of the earth,—she turned, pale, and, clinging closer to his arm, “had seen,” she said, “quite enough for that day ;” nor could all his persuasions induce her to stop to visit the Elephant in the Strand, nor the Fleas, nor the Siamese-Twins ; no, nor even take a turn round Howell and James’s, though it was just the time when the rooms would be crowded with rank and fashion.

With that Aunty was vexed Aunt Barbara was one of those indefatigably kind-hearted souls who thought, when visiting her, you could not have enough of sight-seeing. From the moment you came to her to the moment you left, she was rack-ing her brain for something fresh to please you. The more she could cram into the day, the better ; and, once off, well if you had plenty of spirits, as well as a good pair of legs, else best not go sight-seeing with Aunt Barbara.

“ Let her see—where should they go next day ?”

But next day, the postman having nothing for them, Lucretia—though she hardly could expect a letter yet—was a little sad and out of sorts, and seemed to like her own fireside most. So, Fred humoured her, and sat in a magnificent flowered satin dressing gown by her side, and talked, and read to her, and told her stories to make her laugh ; and, when he saw her thoughts wandering—and who knew where better than he?—he would snatch up his guitar, and sing song after song, so sweetly, so feelingly ! her eyes would fill with tears ; and then, sliding down on a hassock at her feet, he would twine an arm round her waist, and, “ talking to the troubled heart of its troubles, chase those sad thoughts away ; and, when he had brought the smiles up instead—there sit, and gaily talk on, and tease ; till she was forced to own, without

exception, "she *was* the happiest creature on earth!"

And now another week wore away, but no more letters from Hillborough.

Then Lu yielded to Fred's arguments, and, though with little hope therefrom, sat down, and penned a letter would have melted the heart of a Shylock.

But nothing came in return.

"Try again—and again," said Fred. "I must teach you siege operations. I should have been floored at Addiscomb, hadn't it been for them."

With all his tactics, however, the fort was impregnable—Daddy set all their tactics at nought.

"Hit or miss, I'll have a shy myself," cried Fred, "and see what that will do."

And so he did—and made bad worse—no answer came:—"they were a set of — he knew what;" and, snapping his fingers, left the comforting part to Aunty.

Aunty entirely coincided as to what they

were ; but calling names would not mend matters a bit—patience might. Worse wounds had been healed by time. Best *let* time take its course. It was a long lane had no turning. A dark day might come to *them*, and they would feel it. God knew best what was good for us. With Him everything was possible.”

“Yes”—and that brought more comfort to Lucretia’s heart than all the rest put together. “With Him everything *was* possible ;” and, firmly trusting to that rock, she dried her tears, and felt a load taken off her breast, made dear Auntie feel quite happy again.

Fred’s leave of absence drew to a close.

“Dear Lu must make her appearance at head-quarters as befitted wife of his.”

To that Aunt Barbara “quite agreed ;” and, setting the lead—fresh package after package from Oxford Street left nothing to be desired on that score.

Fred followed suit ; and the sight of Lu’s

bed-room was soon quite a little magazin to behold ; Aunty undertaking to stow them all away somehow. but how, was to Lu—whose first experience of anything of the sort this was — one of those wonderful puzzles, only such clever little bodies as Barbara Woodford can accomplish.

It was accomplished ;—and, “now, halt—she couldn’t get a thing more in, try ever so.”

It was the evening, but one, before wishing good-bye. Fred had still one or two little purchases to make at his mercers ; and bidding Lu go put on her close bonnet and cloak, out they sallied together towards Pall Mall.

While in the mercers, immediately opposite Fred’s club, a young brother officer came in for a pair of gloves, and Fred introduced him to Mrs. Woodford. After chatting a bit, Fred followed him to the door.

"Where are you going?"

"Over the way—Frank Craven's match at pool coming off."

"The deuce! Wait will you just half a minute;" and, returning to Lu; — "It would take her," she said, "about half-an-hour more to choose the flannels and long-cloths."

"Very well. Then I will just run over to the club with Hawksley, see what's up, and be back again in twenty minutes."

On went Lucretia with the little purchases. Half-an-hour soon slips away over a mercer's counter.

No—nothing more was wanted; and Lucretia sat, with her hands in her lap, wistfully looking towards the door, impatient for Fred's return.

A private cab dashed up—the apron was thrown back—a tall, middle-aged, gentlemanly figure in an opera cloak hurriedly entered the shop—stopped short on seeing

Lucretia—gave an order to the shopman ; —and, re-entering the cab, off it rattled again up St. James's Street.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked Lucretia—for, although she could hardly be mistaken about him, it was only such a momentary glimpse she had got of his face, that she put the question with a sort of forlorn hope that she might be wrong.

"The Marquis of Hardencore, Madame."

"Lu "wished to goodness Fred would make haste and come. Where could he be?" and she went to the door, hoping to see him.

Nearly another half-hour had gone.

Suddenly the shopman bent forward, and, looking through the window into the street,—"That's Captain Hawksley, I think, Madame," he said, "now coming out of the club."

Lucretia ran to the door again. Two gentlemen, arm in arm, were turning round the corner of the next street close by.

Their backs were towards her, and those she only saw for a moment or two, when they disappeared. "Yes, I think it was—it must have been my husband, with the Captain," she exclaimed; and, piqued a little at his seeming forgetfulness, she was determined to put him to the blush by reminding him of it herself.

The night was dark, and the streets were not lighted at that time as they are now. Lucretia neared the truant—overtook him—turned her sweet face full upon him :—good heavens ! she had mistaken—it was not he, nor the Captain either—it was the Marquis of Hardencore, with a stranger she had never seen before ;—and, falling back, she hoped to escape without being recognised.

No such luck. The Marquis saw his chance, and resolved not to lose it. It was better fortune than he could have supposed his stars would send him. He was well used to woman's feints and fancies ; his

vanity was of a kind that nothing wounded ; his courage no one ever questioned ; and, if gold was wanted, there it was like dross. Leaving his friend's side, he was by Lucretia's before she could be aware of it.

Recoiling from him, as from a serpent, she hastened, trembling, back from whence she came.

The Marquis smiled, and kept up with her.

Quickening her step still faster, Lucretia hoped thus to escape him ; but in vain. The road had to be crossed, and a hackney-carriage, passing at the time, stopped the way.

Lucretia was caught. " Permit me, Madame," whispered the Marquis, offering his arm—" permit me, I pray you—at least to—to—attend you to—"

Lucretia, come the necessity for courage, was no coward. The blood of her father, than whom a braver heart never marched to battle, rushed to her temples. " My Lord,"

she said, stopping short, and in a tone made even the titled libertine start, "for whom, or for what, do you take me, that you dare to insult me thus?"

"Insult you? Nay, that is too cruel," reproved the Marquis, advancing a step forward to intercept her progress:—when suddenly a firm grasp was taken of his collar, and the next moment the noble Marquis was swung heavily into the kennel.

His friend, Colonel Grantham, rushed up—a large crowd assembled—the Marquis, furious with rage and mortification, was got on his legs again—cards were exchanged:—and, putting her into a hackney chariot, Fred explained to Lu how it had all happened:—"He went over to the club with Hawksley, to have a look at the Craven match—there was a dispute about a cannon—then a bit of a breeze—somehow Hawksley was in it—and he couldn't get away before! I'on honour, though"—with a make up kiss—"he hadn't the least idea in the

world, that anything like half-an-hour had slipped away."

Lu believed that ; but " was sorry he had been so rough with the Marquis."

" Teach him better manners another time."

" What were those cards for ?"

" Oh—nothing—a usual little polite form between gentlemen when they quarrel—parting compliments exchanged, that's all."

" Is that all ?"

" What else do you suppose ? By Jupiter ! if there isn't nine striking. Best not say a word about it to any one."

Next day, a little before noon, Colonel Grantham paid a visit to Captain Hawksley. Nothing could be more courteous. Then, about an hour afterwards, Captain Hawksley made an afternoon call on Lieutenant Woodford—Lucretia's heart beating violently all the while they were alone together for nearly ten minutes.

By her side again, Fred passed an arm

round her waist, and, whispering— “ It’s all right enough,” kissed her cheek fondly, on which was a little flush burning, he had never seen there before.”

“ Am I not very foolish?” she said, smiling through her tears. “ Oh, how I have blamed myself ever since!”

“ For what? You acted worthy the wife of Cæsar.”

“ Yes; but I ought not to have left the shop, then it had never happened.”

“ Ah! you see what it is to suspect a good husband. What—how do you mean—what ‘ happened?’ ”

“ Any quarrel at all; and all this scandalous to do about it in the paper.”

“ My aunt hasn’t seen it, has she?”

“ No; I brought it away with me, while she was busy with Esther over the packing, meaning she should not.”

Another fonder kiss, if possible, followed this; when, Auntie appearing :—“ there were a hundred and fifty little things more

to do by to-morrow, and look, how they were standing idle !”

That was true ; and now, all hands at work, dear Aunty was in her element.

Fred helped amazingly till after tea ; when, having no end of letters yet to write, it was past midnight before he got to bed.

Five struck. Lucretia was in a deep sleep—to which a small glass of negus which Fred had mixed for her and made her drink with him after supper, no doubt contributed. Bending over her, and pressing his lips to hers—without the movement of a nerve, she slept so sound—he slipped gently from her side ;—and, his toilet costing him small pains that morning — one more anxious look—one more farewell kiss—one more choking God bless her !—and he was gone.

A cabriolet, in which sat his friend, Lincoln Hawksley, was ready waiting for him in the next street ; he leaped in, and off it dashed in the direction of Chalk-farm.

They were first on the ground.

In less than five minutes after, up rattled the Marquis and Colonel Grantham.

Each bowed politely to the other.

The seconds conferred together for a minute.

The ground was measured out.

Again the seconds exchanged an earnest word or two.

Fred won the toss, and took his place with his back to the light.

"Was all ready?"

"Yes."

"Had either anything to say?"

"Nothing."

"Fire!"—first shots without effect.

The seconds came forward. For all purposes of *honour* the duel might there close."

"Pardon me, no!" said the Marquis.

"So be it," said Fred.

Again—"ready?"

"Fire!"—second shots, Fred's bullet tore the flesh from the Marquis's cheek, and,

splintering the jaw-bone, buried itself in the turf.

The Marquis's was better levelled, and found a home in Fred's heart.

* * * *

When Lucretia woke that morning, who dared be the first to tell her where Fred was then ?

Oh, what a honeymoon !

CHAPTER IX.

THE TROUBLED HEART.

SOME sorrows of life admit of no delineation, as they admit of no comfort.

Poor Lucretia's was, at first, one of them.

The breaking to her by Aunt Barbara of the dreadful truth may be best left to imagination.

No mother could have done it so well.

If any one's voice at that time could have hoped for a way to her heart, it was Aunt Barbara's; but even Aunt Barbara found the utter insufficiency of all worldly efforts to bring back so much as a ray of consolation to the desolate soul.

There was but one way, and, with time, God make it effectual to His end. That way Aunt Barbara had tested the precious value of herself too often in affliction, not to know its sovereign efficacy; and, thus armed, her task was, so far, easy, and her victory sure.

The worst was passed. It was now to bring back the heart gently, but firmly, to its first rightful service—place it at the footstool of its God—resigned, and looking up to Him alone for the Fatherly hand to raise it into His joy and peace again, in His own good time.—Then, and not till then, would His end be gained—Who never scourgeth us but in great mercy, and Who's heaviest chastisements are all love.

The corse was laid out in a back room adjoining her own. This Lucretia knew; but the evening was come, and as yet she lay apparently unconscious of all around her.

Of a sudden, as the doctor approached her bed-side, she raised herself up, and,

grasping him by the wrist, and staring fixedly at him :—" May I go now, and see him ?" she asked.

" Can I trust you ?"

" Yes,"—and there was a solemn earnestness and settled sadness in the tone with which that " yes" was spoken—an astonishing command over herself, that startled him.

For a moment or two they remained motionless, intently regarding each other without a word.

Then—" Yes, I think I can," said the doctor. " Will you come with me now ?"

Steadying herself by the help of Aunt Barbara on one side, and the doctor's arm on the other, they reached the landing, within a yard of the death-chamber.

The doctor stopped an instant, as he felt her whole weight leaning on him. A glance sufficed—" yes, it must find vent, or would break ;"—the door moved back—the room was not six yards wide—and they stood by

the bed of death. "God help her!" muttered the doctor, withdrawing his support.

For a moment she stood alone, and there stayed, as if rooted to the spot, and in a dream, gazing transfixed on the closed eyes and silent lips, locked for ever in death, that but yesterday had been smiling on and talking to her so tenderly; and doubting whether it could be true, that he was dead?—so calm, and handsome, and undeath-like were still his features;—when, stooping over him, and pressing her lips to his, a cry of anguish indescribable burst from her bosom; and, falling with extended arms upon the body, she clasped it to her breast.

Then came the smothered torrent bursting forth, and sweeping all before it—the heart's own final struggle for release, nature's last resource—the convulsive sobs and throes—the gushing floods, faster, and faster;—till, exhausted, she lay with him side by side, as in a sweet sleep, with her

arm encircling his neck; nor dared the doctor at that moment to awake her to reality.

For nearly an hour there she lay, as in a trance; when, opening her eyes—the whole truth seemed to burst on her at once. But the heart was no longer suffocated—she had been talking with him of her troubles, and he with her—the troubled hearts had mingled their woes together;—and, calmly accepting the doctor's offered arm again, she suffered him to lead her from the room; and, motioning him to take a seat by her side, seemed to say:—"Do not leave me yet—speak, speak—fear not—talk to me of him—of Him, too, who has taken him away from me—yes, of Him—talk of Him—his Father and my Father—the Father of the fatherless and the widow."

And the doctor talked, and talked well, as doctors must often talk—talk of more things than their balsams for the body. And, before he rose to take leave, the troubled

heart, too, had found voice, and no longer feared to trust itself ; but talked—and talked on—of “ his love for her—and her love for him”—yes, and of His love for them both—His love, His precious love, though it had smitten her, dearest and best of all ! And then the good doctor knew that the victory was won—that the troubled heart had cast its troubles at the feet of its God ;—and, safely leaving the rest to the watchful care of Aunt Barbara, he went home, pondering on all he had seen :—“ Such scenes always seeming to him,” he would say, “ to make him a better as well as a wiser man.”

CHAPTER X.

A CABINET COUNCIL AT DADDY'S.

THE funeral over, and the necessity for some settled plan for the future requiring to be thought of, Aunt Barbara held counsel with herself.

Next day at breakfast she made known the result to Lucretia, in her usual plain, practical way—she “would take upon herself to write to sister Betty such a letter as must, if she had a woman’s heart in her bosom, be successful.”

Lucretia’s own heart misgave her ; but the proposition was so reasonable, and, moreover, so kind and considerate, that she

saw it would pain Aunty if she urged a word against it; and, therefore, giving her full consent, Aunty finished her letter, and sent it off by that night's post. "And now, wishing it God-speed, let them think no more about it till the fruits came."

The shifting scenes of my story call us back to Hillborough for a little while.

When Geoffry first heard of the duel, and its tragic end, a smile, or something very like one, passed over his iron face. What it denoted, Betty, who sat watching him narrowly, with the newspaper in her hand, and, apparently, full of grief and anxiety, knew very well, and she took her cue accordingly. Left to himself, Betty had now no fear of her father; nor of Timothy, either, who was his counterpart; but she eyed Andrew with distrust. Andrew had ever leaned more to Lucretia than to Tim or herself; and even now, she knew— notwithstanding what had happened—there were times when his heart warmed towards

her, and he would, if he dared, drop a kind word for her before Daddy.

But though Andrew would have forgiven all probably, and been glad to see her at home again next day if he could, he was a Westminster ; and, so being, duty stood before love—Daddy's authority was supreme there—and he must bow down to it, require of him what it would.

Brother Timothy had no scruples in the matter, to tamper with his allegiance—filial duty was filial duty with him. It had been the great pride of his race for ages. Their heir-males had ever walked in the footprints of their fathers. That was their one standard, and he should shape himself by it. Disobedience to a parent had never, under any circumstances, gone unpunished by a Westminster. It was a canon of their house. Lucretia had wilfully transgressed it—set her father at defiance—allied herself, against his consent, in the teeth of his commands, to a poor soldier and a

spendthrift,—and must now take the consequence of her own acts ; he should not screen nor excuse her conduct.

Betty's whole thoughts were, seemingly, on the duel ; but she saw perfectly well how the case stood :—there were two to one against forgiveness, putting herself out of the question ; and, so, feeling safe, she could afford a tear or two ; and, if pity went for anything, poor Lu had enough of it, apparently, that day.

When Aunt Barbara's letter arrived, it so happened that with it came also one from Grace Fairfax. Both were lying on Daddy's plate, put there by Betty, when he came in from wharf-side—his usual first early morning visit when the weather was fine.

Putting on his glasses, he looked at the post-marks—humphed—and, bidding Tim draw up the blind a bit, opened the Fairfax's first.

It was a long ditty, excellently well adapted to the eyes and ears for which it

was intended, and in which self-exculpation just sufficiently made itself heard for vindication sake, without any seeming selfishness.

It began by setting forth ;—“ The deep grief and concern it had caused her, Grace Fairfax, to be the hand to convey to them the calamitous intelligence contained in her last necessarily short, because hasty, letter, written in great anxiety ; and which, as she had anticipated, had naturally plunged them into such cruel and bitter sorrow.”

“ If any family ought to have been spared such a cruel blow, their's ought—a family so remarkable for its excellent domestic government in all its branches, and the merited blessings which, she understood, had always flowed therefrom. But the ways of Providence were inscrutable ; and it was our duty, suffer as we might, to bow to them submissively and cheerfully. No doubt, all was ordered for our good ; though it did seem often in this sinful world, that the wicked went unpunished, while the just

were the only sufferers. But this was not so. In the end, we might rest assured, justice would hold the scales, and then no fear of the right measure being meted out to one and all alike.

“ But she, Grace Fairfax, hoped they— she trusted she might always number them among her dear friends at Hillborough— were as well as, under the affliction it had seemed good to God to visit them with, could be expected ? and that it would please Him to soften and bring back the heart of their erring child to a fitting sense of her misconduct—who, notwithstanding her unkind, and, she must add, ungrateful conduct to herself, should always have her prayers and best wishes. She should be sorry to add a pang to those too many pangs which they were then suffering, or to say one word to inflame their just anger ; but she should not be doing her duty, nor express, as she was bound to do, the gratitude she felt, and should ever feel, for the confidence they had

placed in her, if she did not own to them, how deeply hurt she was, to see such self-will and recklessness in one so young, and who had been always treated so indulgently. That was what grieved her most.

‘ But she would not dwell longer on it ; though, personally, she had suffered more than she could ever express. The knowledge, that she had nothing to lay to her own charge in the matter, was her great comfort. And she was thankful indeed to think, that the reputation of her name and establishment were too surely founded in the esteem of her many friends and patrons to be easily shaken. Still, she would have given—poor as she was—a hundred guineas out of her pocket, rather than such a scandalous occurrence should ever have befallen Fairfax House.”

Such was the substance of the Fairfax letter, and Daddy’s eyes flashed live-coals of fire as he read it through. Then, handing it to Timothy, he took up Aunt Barbara’s,

and, deliberately breaking the seal, just cast a glance at it—but that was enough. It was written in a bold enough character; but the ink was faint, and not an i hardly was dotted, nor a t crossed;—and, with a pish! he tossed it over to Betty—who, taking it up, at a nod from Timothy, read out loud as follows :—

“ Harley Street, &c., &c.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ Pardon the liberty I take, as a
“ stranger, in thus addressing you. A
“ pressing sense of duty, both towards
“ yourself and your poor child, now under
“ my roof and protection, till you will open
“ your heart and arms, and receive her back
“ under your's, alone urges me to do so. I
“ should not be the friend she thinks me,
“ if I could see her visited with affliction,
“ and suffering in mind and body as she
“ now is, and make no effort to help and
“ comfort her.

“ I am not going to say one word, any

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"peal to the score of my love and deep
"solicitude alone,

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"BARBARA WOODFORD."

Having twice read it out, in a firm, cold, distinct voice, by Timothy's wish, Betty laid the letter in her lap, and, flattening it with her palm, looked up, stern as himself, into her father's face.

It was evident, she waited for him to speak first.

It was equally so, that he had no such present intention.

There was a dead silence for half a minute.

Son Timothy was the first to break it.

"H—m?" said he, with his eyes on his thumb—"cool that—what next?"

Another half minute's gnaw of the nail.

"H——m——sly old fish—bad lot—bad as any of 'em, she, too."

"That's it—that's it," sided Daddy.

"Took 'em in—bad spec—don't pay—got sick of it—wants to pack her off—no fool either."

Andrew looked as if he would like to say something, but dared not.

Betty sat watching her father.

"Saucy, too, about it," continued Tim.

Up Daddy started at this, and, planting himself firm, with his back to the fire, and glaring at a black profile portrait of *The Lost Sheep*, facing him over the bureau, Tim got another gnaw at his nail, while Betty turned to the *saucy* part in the letter, and read it out again:—

"A pressing sense of duty, both towards yourself and your poor child, now under my roof and protection, till you will open your heart and arms, and receive her back under your's, alone urges me to do so."

Andrew coughed ; — and "thought," though she had put it strongish rather, she meant well, anyhow ?

A scowl from Daddy asked, "what son Andrew meant by that?" which "shutting Andrew up," as Betty expressed it, they had the rest of the conversation all to themselves.

"Duty—duty," muttered Daddy, keeping his eyes on the profile. "Did it, didn't she? — kept the fifth commandment—honoured her father and mother?"

Betty knitted her shaggy eyebrows, so that they almost met.

Andrew quailed, and, glancing towards the door, was in two minds—whether to escape, or not.

"Sit still, sir," said Daddy.

"Duty! yes—time now to talk of that," sneered Tim. "To be bullied into it, too, are we? Told it, too, as if we were not doing it."

"That's it," cried Daddy,— "as if we were not doing it."

"Stand that—would I?" said Tim.

"Never, by ——!"

•

"Hush, hush!" reproved Betty. "He has been terribly angered enough already.

"That's true!" ventured Andrew.

A lull of some twenty seconds—Andrew keeping his lips tight closed, for fear of himself.

"Read it again," commanded Daddy.

Betty obeyed, without comment of any sort.

Timothy, you are the eldest," said Daddy, lowering his voice, but with a solemn sternness and distinctness that made Andrew tremble;—"now, son Timothy, tell us what you would do?"

"Do?" answered Timothy, quick as thought—"do, sir, what I ought to do—do, sir, the same as you would do, and no other."

"And you, Elizabeth?"

"Likewise, of course."

"And you, son Andrew?"

"I, sir—what would I do?"

Daddy repeated the question.

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it, not she, were always spending and wasting the money, as if it was plenty as water? We always were bringing a pack of lazy beggars about the door, wouldn't live by honest labour? We chose to snap our fingers, not she, in father's face—make our own bed for ourselves—”

That's it—that's it,” cheered Daddy.

“And, now, she, not we have a right, have we, to complain?”

“That's it—that's it.”

“Sorry? yes, I'll be bound for it, arn't we? And now, take us back, won't he? Of course he will—it's his duty;” and Tim giggled at it.

“That's it—that's it.”

“Now, we've had our run, and got sick of it—take us back, won't he? Yes—would I, though, quick, if I were master? She should smart for it a bit first.”

Buttoning up his pockets, for a moment Daddy's lip quivered, as if some terrible words thereon trembled for the utterance

which he dared not give them ; but, whatever they were, there they still were trembling unspoken, when, to Andrew's great relief, a sudden message came for him from the counting-house ; and, desiring Timothy to follow him, he hurried off to the golden summons,—and the crushing weight of those terrible words, be what they might, sister Betty was spared the pang of having to add, as in duty bound, to the already too heavy load which was weighing down the wounded heart.

CHAPTER XI.

AUNT BARBARA'S BUDGET.

THE morning but one after this brought the postman to Aunt Barbara's door with a Hillborough letter for her.

It was from Geoffrey Westminster, written in a pinched, pointed hand, on a large sheet of "outsides," and sealed with red wax, on which the initials G. W., dear to him far beyond all the other letters of the alphabet, figured largely.

Aunt Barbara read and re-read it half a dozen times, as if once were not enough to stamp it for life on her memory. It was not that made her stand poring over it, as

if in a dream, while Esther waited, wondering what could be the matter, with her cap in her hand, to finish her for breakfast;—but how she should best take the sting out of it for poor Lucretia.

Dismissing Esther, she thought for a moment longer—went straight into Lucretia's room, with the letter open in her hand, and, sitting down on the bed-side, peeped cautiously over first, to see if she was asleep.

She was dozing ill when Aunty entered; but now their eyes met, greeting each other smilingly; and, kissing the pale cheek, and holding up the letter—"Here it is, love," said Aunty.

But Lucretia had been dreaming—dreaming of Fred;—and his eyes were still on her, and his voice sounding in her ears—sweetly sounding, as when, encircled by his arm, she last heard it singing melody after melody in that chamber,—and she had to dry away a tear which came swimming,

before she could quite understand what letter dear Aunty meant.

Aunty dear understood it all, and, had she had only her own heart to please, would have liked a good cry to her own share just then as well as anyone; but tears were not exactly the sort of weapons she thought most needed at that moment, to battle it with Daddy; and to Lucretia's inquiry, "if it was from her father," put more by looks than by words—"Yes, love, here it is," she repeated; "and, taking it altogether, as good, I think, as we could have expected at present;" with which, putting on her gold spectacles, she made no more ado about it, but read it out as follows:—

"Hillborough, &c., &c.

"DEAR MADAM,—

"Your favour of yesterday's date came duly to hand. It is very kind of you to befriend Mrs. Frederick Woodford as you are doing, and I hope she will

“ prove grateful for it. I regret she should
“ have placed herself in a position to need
“ any other friends than her own father
“ and family have always been to her, and
“ would have continued, had she chosen it.
“ That is her own seeking, not mine. As
“ she has made her bed, so she must lie.

“ With regard to her return to the home
“ her own self-will and disobedience alone
“ have turned her out of, I do not see how,
“ in justice to my other children, who have
“ never offended me, I can consent to it ;
“ nor will I, at all events, till I see whether
“ her sorrow is as sincere as you say it is.

“ After acting as she has done, she can
“ have no further claim on me. But, as
“ child of mine, I cannot see her want. I,
“ therefore, from the receipt of this, will,
“ as long as life is spared me, and her con-
“ duct warrants it, make her an annual
“ allowance of £100—one hundred pounds,
“ to be paid to her, or her order, quarterly,
“ in advance, at Messrs. Prescott's, Thread-

“ needle Street, London ; her receipts for
“ which shall be sufficient vouchers. This,
“ with her widow’s pension, and with industry, ought to be ample to keep her
“ respectably, and, with frugality, to lay
“ by something.

“ She is at liberty to choose her own
“ home ; with that I shall not interfere.
“ For her own sake, it will be such, it is to
“ be hoped, as her friends will sanction.

“ As to the future, that will depend entirely on circumstances. I make no promise, one way or the other. But I must
“ beg, once for all, not to be troubled with
“ any further correspondence ; and, with
“ compliments, &c., I remain,

“ Dear Madam,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ GEOFFRY WESTMINSTER.”

Aunt Barbara had taken an anxious look more than once at the pale cheeks and fixed gaze, as she read on, and, though her

tone did not betray it, had enough to do, to still the beatings of her own heart in concert therewith. But "giving way" was not her point just then. She had rightly conceived, all minor griefs were merged in the one all-absorbing sorrow—Fred's arm was still round her neck—his eyes, blue and bright as in life, were still upon her—his voice still singing sweetest melodies in her ear;—and Daddy's letter hardly caused a pang.

For a little while she lay absently thinking, as if she had scarcely heard it; when, suddenly seeming to recollect herself, she held out her hand for it; and, sitting up, read it through, cold and calm as marble. Then, returning it to Aunty, a smile played in her face, as she grasped her hand in both hers; and, though the words hung on her lips unuttered, dear Aunty heard them say clear enough—"I am happier now—I did not want to return there—that load, thank Heaven, is removed! Give me

a home with you, I want no other. The sole God worshipped *there* is Gold. Oh, never did I feel the want of The *One, True, And Only God*, for my *Father and Friend*, as now !”

And, hearing them, what did Aunt Barbara do?—settled herself on the bed ; and, keeping the loved hand locked in her’s : “ Shall I tell you a little story ?” she asked.

“ Yes,” answered the tearful smile that met hers ; and thus Aunt Barbara told her story :—

“ There was once a great, rich man, richer than all his neighbours. There was no counting the wealth he had got. He could hardly count it himself. He could scarcely get a wink of sleep of a night, thinking how vast it was ! But, vast as it was, it was not enough—he must make more—and more—and more ! But this hardened his heart and made him grasping, and greedy, and mean ; so that he never

enjoyed what he had, nor could find, of all his riches, even a sixpence to give to the poor.

“ And his heart grew harder and harder. And he set up, did this great, rich man, *two* Gods in his house to be worshipped—for he went to his prayers, did this rich man, regularly night and morning, with all his household, as all good men ought to do. Two Gods he set up for their worship—their sabbath-God—and their six-days-God; and he ordered them all to worship them—their sabbath-God on the sabbath day, and their six-days-God on the six days.

“ And this great, rich man had four children ”——

“ Nay, nay,” interrupted Lucretia, the tears running down her cheeks, “ you must not—oh, no, no—spare him—he is my father.”

“ He is ! And would he were here this moment, my poor child, to hear the blessed Truth told him for once. It might save a

soul alive. Nay, nay, I have began my story, and must end it. I would not shrink from telling it him with these lips, no, that I would not, as there is a just heaven above us! if he stood before us face to face at this moment, and his frown would kill me for it. He has spoken out his heart, and so will I mine. Kiss me, love, then,—and now hearken:—

“ Four children had God given this great, rich man to inherit his wealth, and carry his name down from generation to generation. And he said to them,—‘ Bow down, I command you, my children, and worship the Gods I have set up for you—this, your six-days-god, for six days—this, your sabbath-God, on sabbaths.’

“ And his children did as he ordered them, all but one ; and she would not bow down and worship the Golden God which her father had set up for her.”

Faster and faster rolled the tears down the pale cheeks as Aunt Barbara went on ;

but, she had began her story, and *would* end it.

“Then they made her home a hell to her, not a paradise on earth, as it ought to have been.

“And she coveted not their wealth, and would serve but one God;—and they were wrath, and turned away from her, and treated her with scorn, as an alien.

“And she could not abide in that house, where no love was, and forsook it for the home of the stranger.”

“Yes, and therein she erred,” sobbed Lucretia, convulsively tightening her grasp of Aunty’s hand, “greatly erred; for therein she sought her own ways, rather than His, wherein there was no fear.”

“Yes—and trouble, sore trouble, came upon her,” responded Aunty, returning the pressure; “trouble sent of Him, whose ways, poor lamb, she strayed from for her own; but trouble full of mercy, neverthe-

less—rich, and healing mercy—full of great love and tenderness!

“ And she asked forgiveness of Him for her selfishness, and He granted it.

“ And, then, she implored pardon of her earthly father; but he was incensed, and would not hear her; and, narrowly portioning her off, shut his doors in her face, and bade her trouble him no more.

“ And then she called on her God to be her Father, and He answered her, *Y'es*. She called on her Heavenly Father, who in justice had smitten her, to come to her help and He bade her rise, and weep no more.

“ And again she called on Him for the renewed spirit, whereby she should guide her steps aright.

“ And He gave it her. And It said to her—‘seek not to return to your father’s house again—to the house of mammon—to serve the Golden Idol therein set up; but

henceforth seek and serve ME, and I will give you wealth.'

"And her heart was relieved of a great load from that hour. And she dried up her tears; and from thenceforth went and worshipped Him alone; and untold came her priceless riches therefrom."

"And now my story is ended," said Aunt Barbara, "I have a thought in my head, dearest, I'll tell you all about, when you have had your breakfast; and that shall be just where you are this morning. So, now I'll go down and see about it; and send you up a nice new-laid egg; and mind you eat up every bit of it."

The breakfast over, Aunt Barbara opened her promised budget.

Aunty was not one for needless periphrases, or circumlocutions; she usually had a pretty clear conception of what she was going to say, and came to the point at once. In the present instance she had two hearts to think and act for, and, so, must be par-

done, if she was a little more circumstantial than ordinary.

“Well now, love,” she began, “you know I told you, I have long had thoughts of giving up this dull old house. It is too large a great deal for me, and I’m sure I should have my health much better in the country. Dr. Hooper says the same. While my dear brother, the General, was living, it was a different matter—I could not leave him; now I have nothing to stop in London for; besides which, the expenses of this place are ruinous, if I am ever to put by enough to make me worth looking after; and my income would make me quite a duchess down in Herefordshire. I could keep, you see, beside Esther, and Clough, and Martha, a page, if I liked, and a pony-chair, and post in the chariot when we went out to dinners and teas. Now there are two fat idle beasts there behind eating their heads off, and nothing to do. I am sick of the parks. Then you see, love, there are

three nice meadows at "The Briers," enough for two cows; and we could keep our own pigs, and poultry, and pigeons, and, if you liked, a peacock and pea-hen, too. Trust me, I should be as happy as a queen!

"Just look what it costs me here, and I haven't a pleasure, not a pleasure I'd give a button for. The lease of "The Briers" was out at Michaelmas. And now I'll tell you—I've as good as made up my mind never to let it more; but to put it in thorough repair, and fit and furnish it up beautifully—make it a perfect *bijou*,—and go and live in it for the remainder of my days—wouldn't that be charming?"

If too full a heart, that wanted words, ever said yes unmistakably, dear Aunty had her wished-for answer at that moment.

"It *would*, love! There isn't a prettier place than Rexbury in all Herefordshire. You don't know Ross, about an hour's ride from it? No—then you have a sweet treat to come. If you love the country as I do,

I can imagine your delight! The Wye—where find such another river in all England and Wales for the picturesque? Your portfolio would soon be quite a little treasure house of Cuyps, and Gainsboroughs, and Copley Fieldings. And such beautiful walks and drives, too, all about! And, for health, only look at Rexbury churchyard—AGED EIGHTY, on all sides. Law, love, if Dan Ratcliffe, the doctor—we knew each other when boy and girl—If Dan hadn't married a girl with a little money, he must have starved at Rexbury, he says, or gone on the parish long ago.

“ And the Vicar—talking of churchyards—show me a dearer, nicer, better, man any where, 'twixt Canterbury and Cornwall? I do think, if there's a faultless man on earth, it is Peter Borrington. To the rural-fold, especially, its Pastor is everything, love, don't you think so? Well, there they have got him in perfection; and, what's more, know his value. But, then, they can't but

know it. He makes them see it, and hear it, and feel it, every man, woman, and child of them, every day of their lives. Whether they will or not, he is their friend. And he is such a gentleman, too! What I mean by that love is—the true gentleman is stamped on every thing he does. Birth and education alone don't always do that, dear —don't always give the large heart with the enlarged mind, and right regard for the feelings of others, combined in Peter Borrington. Where they do, as in his case, *there* is their true nobility. And, pray, tell me, come to that, where do you want the two combined more than in your rural nooks and corners? Why put your narrow mean minds and cramped hearts there? as if there were not already a deal too many of them. No—send your great to the little, and your little to the great—and both may stand a chance of improving each other by it. Don't be larding your fat pig, either way,

I can imagine your delight ! The Wye—where find such another river in all England and Wales for the picturesque ? Your portfolio would soon be quite a little treasure house of Cuyps, and Gainsborough and Copley Fieldings. And such beautiful walks and drives, too, all about ! And, for health, only look at Rexbury churchyard—AGED EIGHTY, on all sides. Law, love, Dan Ratcliffe, the doctor—we knew each other when boy and girl—If Dan hadn't married a girl with a little money, he must have starved at Rexbury, he says, or gone on the parish long ago.

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Borrington make you stare a bit, at first, with his plain dealing. It's not surface only him him. You'll get at his heart before you've been together half-an-hour. Though, mind, by-the-bye—no cap-setting at my Peter, if you please. My Peter, you'll be pleased to understand; for he was an old beau of mine before I turned up my hair into a knot, and used to help make him his school-cakes. Well, then, now I'll tell you what I mean to do—what I mean we both should do. Hillborough—there's an end to that—at all events just yet, thank goodness! But don't I know your pride, your independence—that you'd rather go and earn twelve shillings a-week, shirt making, than be a burden upon any one. Good! And so would I. Well, then, now hear me.—One home must hold us, that's settled. I am not going to keep you for nothing. You like sweet bread as well as I? Good again! Let's see—there's the hundred a-year, clear, beside the pension. In pity's

name why need you be a burden on any one? There now—pay me fifty of it, and we'll shake hands, and go and live together in clover."

The kissing and hugging that followed this very handsome proposition of dear Aunty's, as Esther entered with a parcel of new books from the library, told plainly enough that something was in the wind; and, it soon transpiring what that something was, all was joyful bustle and preparation in the "dull old house," making ready for the happy new one.

CHAPTER XII.

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT IT?

PERHAPS, playing second-fiddles, and those very small ones, in their families, could scarcely be accounted a peculiar feature with the wives and daughters of the Westminsters—some pages of whose mammon-history we are considering,—seeing how the same sort of little-fiddling obtains among us, even in these broad-margined days of magnanimous masculines.

Whether our English wives and daughters will ever attain to the coveted social equalities they aspire to, and the first fiddle-playings their selfish lords and

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their management, together with the provision marketings, and managings, and makings and mendings of the linens, were concerned, they can be said to have played any fiddles at all. All else they left to their men ; and went on with their housewiferies, and housekeepings, and makings, and mendings, without an ambition beyond. Their life's aim and end was to save what their men made, not for themselves, but for the next heir-male, though it might take from themselves every shilling. Thus, their enormous wealth had gone down from father to son, and from brother to brother ; while their wives and sisters deemed themselves well off, if insured but a mere competence.

And this sort of slavish preference for their men over their women had ever obtained among them ; till, at the death of Mary, Geoffry's wife, Elizabeth, or Betty, as she was universally called, became so indispensable to her father and to Tim, that soon no fiddle was to be heard so loud in

the house," and taking first parts so often, as daughter Betty's.

And, what was stranger, Daddy seemed to like to hear it, too. There was something in Betty, ill-favoured in person as she was, handsomer in Daddy's eyes than all his other children—a certain self-consciousness of moneyed right, and power, with a determination to support it, tinctured with far more personal pride and ambition than he had ever seen or heard of in any of his ancestors, that tickled with his humour; and there were times, when he would look on her, and Timothy, and almost wish in his heart, "Tim, as his heir-male, had had more of his sister in him."

Few things but what Betty's sharp eyes saw to the bottom of, if so inclined; and this she saw, and, so, no wonder at the now louder, and louder, first-fiddle playings.

Secondary considerations as all the female Westminsters had ever been in their family circles, Betty might well plume herself on

the important personage she was in her own. Therein alone might Daddy be said to have strayed from the old course. But Betty was so entirely a reflex of himself, made herself so useful and agreeable to him, identified herself so thoroughly with all his whims and ways, was a steward, too, that improved so largely the talents committed to her charge—that, had she been only male, instead of female, not only might Betty have played first fiddle, without rival, for Daddy; but, in the teeth of all precedents, the probability is, Timothy and Andrew would have had no cause to thank her in the end. As it was, she was *not* male, and so, might fiddle away, firsts, as fast as she liked—it never caused them a wink the less.

They both, like Daddy, had a pride in her—she so completely realized all that the chronicles had brought down to them of the fine old portraitures of their former women; with a touch of character, about

her, all her own, though in strict family-keeping, was very striking! She was so useful to them, too, about the house—things going on always like clockwork, and Daddy never having anything to find fault with on that score. She took so much household trouble off them; whatever she did, turned out right, too; so that Daddy used often to say in joke,—“if she would go and put on a coat, waistcoat, and trousers, he would find her a stool in the counting-house, and shame James Hoxton entirely, with all his great watchful eyes wide open.”

Where female influence in a house rides allowably high, it gets on a pace, with right horsemanship. But it wants skill and knowledge how to do it. Betty rode not at random; but, keeping a firm seat, though not too tight a rein, and minding her leaps, got on at an astonishing rate! She rode well—for the sort of animals were under her—was acknowledged their mistress, for she ruled them lawfully; by their natures;

and, though one might snort at times, another jib a bit, up hill, another want pushing on, even down-dell — wonderful what right-handling will do—it's worth all the curbing, and whipping, and spurring, put together. All the same—keep them up to it as she might—Betty should ride, and Betty should drive—on—on—on they would go—push them along as she would—on—on—on—on—on,—satisfied—sharp work as it might be now and then—if Betty could not bring them safe and sound to the journey's end, who, in luck's name, could?

“Surely, none other so well,” smiled Betty to herself;—and now, again in counsel, with the reins in her hand—what thinks the reader of her last achievement?

Was Aunt Barbara wrong, in making sure, when she read Daddy's letter to her that anxious morning, that “Betty had had a whole hand, not a finger only, in that pie?”

Aunty was never more right. There had

been two cabinet councils about it, though Daddy was very poorly, and touchy, and irritable, so that none of them could please him ;—when, Betty resolved, Timothy was entrusted with the rough draft. But, so very rough was it, Andrew should try his hand. But Andrew's fell utterly short ; and, out of patience, Daddy, taking his eyes off Mary's portrait, petulantly snatched up the paper, and " would see what he could do." But his hand shook so, he could make nothing of it to Betty's mind ; and, so, putting their heads together, she and Tim at last produced the right thing ; though Betty had to fight hard to strike out several expressions, " rather too sharp," she thought, which Tim wanted to put in, to make it what it should be.

At last completed, Daddy would have it read aloud :—altered the £80 a-year, which he had at first named, to £100 ; and, after a little, agreeing to Tim's suggestion, to add a line, " not to be troubled with any further

correspondence ;"—sealed and directed it ; and, putting it into the post with his own hand—felt an odd sort of feeling come suddenly over him, that made him get back home again as fast as he could to the fire.

There — he shivered and shook ; and, though Betty heaped on more wood and coals, and threw his large brown great coat over him, and made him a hot cup of tea, and wrapped his feet up in warm flannel—shake and shiver he would, do all she could ; till Timothy coming in with James Hoxton, they got him to bed after a little persuasion ; and James going round to the doctor,—it was agreed, he should drop in presently, as if for a chat—not seeming as if he came because he was ill, but only for a little town-gossip.

By the time the doctor got there, Betty's hot cordials and comforters had brought back the blood more to the surface, and Daddy had ceased shivering ; but now his faced looked flushed and puffed. his skin

was burning hot, and he could hardly bear a single blanket on him ; and, when Timothy put the tea-cup to his lips, he grasped it eagerly, and tried to drink, he was so parched with thirst ; but was seized with a spasmodic constriction of the chest and throat, and, dropping the cup, lay back on Andrew's shoulder, gasping as if for breath.

It was no time then for gossiping. This was the second fit of nearly the same kind he had had within twelve months, and such another, the doctor said, would be his death.

In a little while, however, after some blood had been drawn from his arm, he got better, so much so, that he wanted to get up again, and go down stairs, for he never liked it to be thought that he was ill. And presently, while their eyes were off him for a minute, he slipped out of bed, and tried to stand upright ; when, losing his balance, he staggered backward, and fell heavily to the ground.

Again in bed, and Betty keeping watch

he sunk into a deep doze ; muttering through out the night incoherent business orders to James Hoxton, mixed up with angry ejaculations, and peevish complaints, as if in pain,—and threats against some one who had injured him and owed him money ; and then Betty distinctly heard him twice ask for Lucretia, and moan and sob in his sleep, and call on Mary, her mother ; whereupon, gently turning him on his right side, the vision was gone, and he awoke, and, staring about him, motioned for some drink—which taken, he lay down again with a groan ; and not an intelligible word more escaped him till next morning.

Then he rallied again a little, and was more cheerful, giving his orders to Timothy so calmly and collectedly, that Andrew and Molly “made sure he would be down again to dinner in a day or two.”

But the two days passed—and two more—and other twain after them :—and, then—dinner any more for Daddy ? No, no,

poor old Molly!—Andrew's face must have told you as much—no more dinners, old Molly, for Daddy.

It came about just as the doctor feared it would:—a lull for a few days—a short breathing-time, to gather fresh strength to bring the final blow heavier down; then the last struggle, terrible to behold!—a struggle, as if with Satan himself, for the miser's heart, and it was made all of Gold, and he, Geoffry, was trying his dying old strength with him, to see whether he should get it; then the one tug more;—and, the struggle over, the finishing stroke, which sent the clay to its mother earth, and the soul to its dread account.

And next day was not all Hillborough astir?

Oh, Gold, Gold! what motive power like thine?

Who, had ever [seen old Hillborough show the life, and pulse, and spirit, it did that day?

Death—such a death—cast a gloom ?

Nonsense ?

Was there not now more than half a million in the old town going to change hands ?

Whose doing was that ?

Death's !

Such death cast a gloom ?

Nonsense !

But—" who'd have thought it ?"

" Ah ! who indeed ?"

" And after only a week's illness."

" Thou fool ! This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

" True—true —what a lesson !"

" And more than Half a Million to change hands ?"

" Enormous ! When will the Will be read ?"

" Perhaps not before the funeral."

" Oh, what a time to wait !"

" Son Timothy is safe enough ?"

" No doubt."

"And Andrew?"

"Sure to be, too."

"Betty—how about her?"

"A hundred thousand, if she's got a penny!"

"And Lucretia Woodford?"

"Not a farthing—how could she expect it?"

"Good gracious! It seems impossible! Daddy Westminster dead! And worth more than Half a Million! And after only a week's illness! Who'd have ever thought it?"

"Ah! a lesson, isn't it—a lesson for us all?"

CHAPTER XIII.

OFF TO THE COUNTRY.

Yes, who indeed would have thought it, thought to see Geoffrey Westminster thus severed for ever from his gold—to have noted him, though with face more sunk rather, and serious, still tough and strong of nerve as ever seemingly, cheapening the herrings at his door, not a fortnight ago, over Nanny Lynch's fish-basket, and smacking his lips at the thought of the fat fries unnumbered were yet in store for him?

What pang so agonizing to the miser as that he must part from his riches?

When Nanny Lynch's time came, Nanny was spared *that* trouble.

Nanny used sometimes to think to herself —“ what a death-bed Geoffry's would be !”

Well, riches had done their last service—the upholsterer had left nothing undone—nor the parson either—nor the clerk—nor the sexton—nor the mutes—nor the mourners—what money could do, was done :—and Geoffry Westminster was left to his rest.

Now, then, for the Will !

Three monster parchments are hardly enough sometimes on which to give away little more than as many thousands. Geoffry wasted nothing ; and made over some six hundred thousand pounds in about the space of a sheet of foolscap. But, then, Geoffry had very simple, easy, notions on the subject of inheritances, as all his race had ever had before him. He took his own father's will for a precedent, and no one had ever disputed that. He left all he possessed in the world, upwards of four

hundred thousand pounds, to him ; except a thousand pounds, each, to three blind sisters, daughters of a farm-tenant, who regularly knitted him three pair of lambs-wool stockings every winter ; and an annuity of forty pounds to Jenny Welch, his servant—and a sheet of Bath-post would have contained it all.

Let him, Geoffry, see how simple, and short, and saving, he could also be.

First, then :—To Timothy, his first born, he bequeathed, absolutely, all his Freeholds, whatsoever, and wheresoever situated ; together with the Brewery-plant, and appendages, maltings, wharfs, and warehouses, and stock in trade entire, just as they stood at his death, in and about Hillborough. Also the Banking-Houses, and Business thereunto belonging, then carried on in his name at Hillborough and Reddington ; and Three Hundred Thousand Pounds, in Bank-Consols.

Second :—To Andrew Gilbert, his second

and youngest son, all his Copyholds in and about Reddington; the Great Tithes of Little Thornden, value about Four Hundred a-year; and, in ready money, One Hundred Thousand Pounds, Consols.

Third :—To Elizabeth, his eldest daughter by his first wife, the Copy-hold, red-brick-built residence, and premises thereunto belonging, together with the gardens and orchards and two meadows attached, called Blythe House, in the parish of Coltsfold, near Hillborough, and the furniture and effects complete, as then standing; and Fifty Thousand Pounds, Consols—Provided always, nevertheless—that if she, his daughter Elizabeth, married within five years after his death, then, and in that case, half of the said One Hundred Thousand Pounds should go from her, and revert to Timothy and Andrew in equal portions; or, in the event of the death of either of them before then, to the survivor, which ever that might be; or if both should be dead,

then to Lucretia, his youngest daughter, by his second wife.

Fourth :—To Lucretia, his youngest child, Twenty Thousand Pounds, clear, Consols, on her attaining the age of Twenty-one.

Fifth :—To Molly, his old faithful servant, a year's full wages over and above ; two suits of decent mourning ; One Hundred Pounds in ready cash ; and Twelve Shillings a-week, charged on his funded property, for the remainder of her days.

And sixth :—To James Hoxton, his faithful clerk and collector, Two Thousand Pounds.

A short Codicil, made and executed subsequently to his daughter Lucretia's marriage with Lieutenant Frederick Woodford, revoked the £20,000 in her favour, and gave it to Elizabeth ; with a hope, ' that if her future conduct merited it, she, Elizabeth, would do something for her.' Furthermore, it made Timothy sole residuary legatee ;—

and thus Geoffry Westminster filled his foolscap sheet full—and was then ready to yield up his soul to his God; and his gold, too, when his time came, and he could clutch it fast no longer.

Technicalities apart, the reader has now all the knowledge necessary of the last Will and Testament of Geoffry Westminster, of Hillborough; a document, the reading of which by his lawyer, Archibald Sharpe Esq., in the little back parlour, “gave him and his brother leech,” Dr. Woodford used often to say, “more to do, round and about, while it was going on, than they had had, worse luck, for many a long day;—one or two he could name, if he liked, who had built on it for paying off their debts and getting comfortable, being in such a state to know the result, that another day’s suspense, and they must have sunk under it, and so given their creditors the slip that way.

Poor fools! And what are you stopping, and staring at each other for now, as if

dumbfounded? You know there is not a shilling for you; and, yet, there you continue to stop, and stare, and cry, strange! and shame on him! and scandalous! as if Geoffry had not a perfect right to do what he liked with his own, and you had fairly earned something by your flatteries. And so you have—the laughs and ridicule of your neighbours. But laugh with them, too, and go home, poor fools! and set to work to make the gold for yourselves—it's ill waiting for dead men's shoes.

For you—who felt any compassion?

But for poor Lucretia—and not a sixpence—many a heart *did* bleed that day!

“Cruel of Daddy!”

“Unfatherly!”

“Unnatural!”

“What will she do, poor thing?”

“Unless Betty make it up to her.”

“Betty?”

“Timothy may do something.”

“Timothy?”

" More likely, Andrew, a great deal."

" If he don't put it off, and forget."

" Only got her widow's pension, then,
now?"

" That's all."

" The annuity stops?"

" Of course."

" Gone as soon as come?"

" Poor Lucretia!"

Yes; but Aunt Barbara added to her many other excellent qualities, was a little woman of business, though as proud as any one of her blood and pedigree; and had insisted on Lucretia's accompanying her into the City, the morning after the receipt of her father's letter, and, when in Thread-needle Street, dropping in at Prescott's, and then and there making herself mistress of the quarter in advance. Next day came a few lines from Archibald Sharpe, by the family's desire, to tell of Daddy's illness; and then Aunty congratulated herself that the money was safe in her pocket.

The intelligence of the death, and the contents of the Will, came next, and, with dear Aunty to support her, though it stunned her at first, Lucretia bore the blow with Christian firmness. The thought, however, that weighed most at heart was, what if her disobedience had been the cause of her father's illness, and, but for her, he might have lived many a year yet to come?

But Aunt Dorothy would not listen to that. "What did the doctor say?"—for she, Aunty, had written to him for his opinion, thinking thereby to be armed at all points—"what said the doctor?— 'That she must not think in that way;' that, on the contrary, Daddy was as well as usual, though rather snappish and fractious, till the day before the fit came on, and had eaten a hearty supper off his favourite herrings and egg-sauce, only the night before; that, at any moment it might have occurred as it did; that, no doubt anger, and the stormy counsels in the little back-

parlour, had helped to excite and agitate him ; but anything that had happened to go wrong in business, or otherwise, would have done the same ; that, he, the doctor, said when he had the last fit, ten to one but he would have another before twelve months, it was nothing more than was to be expected ; heaven knew, he had carried it pretty well his own way, had Daddy, all his days ; but that the battle was not to be for ever to the strong ; gold had to be paid for as well as everything else on earth ; well if it cost a man only his life *here*—what was that compared with the price some paid for it hereafter ?”

Thus fortified, Aunty went bravely to work ; and, the wound healing over a little, “ they must soon begin to think in earnest of packing up for ‘ The Briers ;’ and, once there, see if they would envy any mortal soul, though rich as Rothschild ! Then I mean to write to Archibald Sharpe, myself, love,” added Aunty, kissing the sweet cheek

looking up lovingly at her ;—" and you shall see—though a bit bluff and rough at times—lawyers have a deal to try them—he has a good heart at bottom, know how to get at it,—you shall see, love—see, if, somehow, we can't do something with Timothy about the Annuity. And, if that fail, as dear Sophy says, ' I've another thought in my head !' Only have done with any more of those tears now—and see if you shan't eat as sweet a loaf as any of them !"

That was the point. Auntie had probed the wound to the bottom. But there was healing, too, in her every touch. Insure her but that sweet loaf, and, could it only be done by stitch, stitch, stitch, up in a garret, from morning to night, for twelve shillings a-week—Lucretia, felt she could work her fingers off, and be as happy, every bit, as sister Betty.

Her father had insisted on Sophy Woodford's return home immediately after the elopement. " What would become of his

practice, if it got about that a daughter of his took part in such scandalous doings? He should disinherit her, as most certainly Daddy would Lucretia, for her disobedience, unless she came back to him directly. A pretty market Fred had made of it. Daddy ever give them a shilling? Wilful folks would have their way. All the same, she, Sophy Woodford, was to return immediately, and answer questions for herself, for he would tell no fibs for her."

So, Lucretia lost her bridesmaid and companion, and poor Fred a staunch champion, when he wanted one, in cousin Sophy.

"There is one thing," consoled Fred; "she can keep a look out, and let us know how the land lies, can't she?"

That was true;—and in a day or two came another long letter to her ever dearest Lu, with every particular she thought would interest her of their goings on at Hillborough.

"The Will had given great dissatisfaction

—great disgust to several! Every one expected Timothy to take the bulk, and Andrew to the full as much as he had got; but to give Betty “Blythe House,” and Fifty Thousand clear, and not even to continue the Annuity to Lucretia, everybody thought was so unjust! Then, to make Timothy, in addition, sole residuary legatee, by which, it was reckoned, he would secure first and last, Forty or Fifty Thousand more, did seem to be larding the fat pig with a vengeance, didn’t it? The town was returning to its senses. Timothy was Daddy the second in everything. He only wanted another twenty years on his shoulders, and a snuffy, thread-bare, square-tailed, brown coat, to be Daddy himself, to act. Andrew had gone to live at Reddington on his property; and Betty at Blythe House, and had brought herself a great iron-grey horse and four wheeled chaise.

“They were all well contented with their shares. There was not the slightest

jealousy. By the rule of their race, if Timothy married, and had a son, he would inherit first; if not, and he, Tim, died first, Andrew would take all. And *vice-versa*. And if both died unmarried, and Betty survived them, then she would succeed to the whole.

"Molly was hugging herself on her good luck, and was to stop and live with Timothy to the end of her days.

"James Hoxton was a little down in the mouth. He expected Five Thousand at least; but Timothy had as good as promised to make it up to him one of these days, and find him a rich wife, to boot.

"Thus stood matters with them. But whether Betty had the heart to ever do what she ought for her dearest Lu, Sophy had great doubts. Best not to deceive herself. It was possible. Or, what was more likely, Andrew might. Still, if the case were Sophy's own, she knew she would rather rely on her ten fingers, and God's

help, if she wanted a loaf, than on either of them—now that they had the power.”

Lucretia looked at her own ten, as she read, with an affection she had never regarded them with before; and, brushing away the last tear on that score, calmly doubled up Sophy's letter, and, putting it in her pocket, went with a lighter heart, to help dear Aunt Barbara with her plans and packages, than she had known since poor Fred's death.

Aunt Barbara declared, “she felt fifteen years younger already, every morning she opened her eyes, at the thought of seeing her old beau, Peter Dorrington, again so soon; and sniffing the breeze would come loaded with ten thousand bouquets into her bed-room window every time she threw it up, to take a peep over the fields at his white chimney-pots.”

Everything is in taste and turn of mind, come to your cottage and content. Harley Street, and “The Briers”—what antipodes!

In all Marylebone pick out a spot less picturesque than Harley Street. Its uniformity quite makes the eyes ache. There isn't a feature in it, look at it how you will, to make a landscape of. It is the most unpoetical street in all London. One long, uniform, dull, dingy, line of mammon merchant's houses, and gaunt Indian nabobs, from top to bottom, redolent of nothing but Leadenhall Street, currie powder, and cockatoos. Heard any one ever a gleeful note greet his ear there—the twitter of a singing bird, the spring flower-girls crying their posies up and down, or even a butcher-boy's whistle? When saw mortal eye the sun on both sides of it at once. How the cold, sharp winds do blow up and down it, when the sun has bade it good day. And how dreadfully proud and cross the masters and mistresses all look if you meet them; and the little masters and misses, what little despots where they dare to be—oh, what a life among them for the poor, patient, go-

verness ! Oh, what joy when, out of the great iron-gates into the New Road, one gets again a glimpse of the trees in the Regent's Park ; or, at the other end, in Cavendish Square, a patch of green turf, " though no bigger," as Aunt Barbara used to say, " than the loo-table," set her thinking of the little velvet-lawn at Roxbury, where the honey-bees and the butterflies were revelling from morn to night."

Well, off at last for the bees and the butterflies, Aunty's genuine joy was something delicious to be alongside of ; and, carried away from herself by its winning influence, Lucretia felt to be breathing a new life at every step. Aunt Barbara was one of those, who, if there was a sunny side of the picture at all, was sure to choose it ; though often, out of fun, or a little caprice, she would not seem to see it ; till, it suiting her to open her eyes, such floods of light did she instantly receive, and return, that every object about her seemed to be dane-

ing for joy as well as herself, at the idea of what a beautiful world it was that we lived in! if we could but see it in the colours its great and good Author had painted it in, and not in the vicious tints and touchings-up we thought proper occasionally, and with eyes, too, wide open—there was the wickedness!—to bedaub, and bespoil it, withal.

Aunt Barbara's was a pictorial bosom of the sunniest sort, and her Harley Street life had been a great penance to her. She owed it, in gratitude, to her brother, the General, and paid it cheerfully. She was indispensable to the comfort of his last years, and never left him. At his death, he gave her the lease of the Harley Street House, worth, then, two hundred a-year, with the furniture and effects thereto belonging, just as they stood, and a handsome legacy, the bulk of his property going to a pet nephew. And she had continued to live in it, more from old associations than

anything else; till the thought of "The Briers," the home of her childhood, where the happiest years of her life had been spent, urged on her by Peter Borrington's periodical persuasions, got such a hold, that it only wanted some congenial soul to come and say, "let us, hand in hand, and heart in heart, go and make it our home together,"—and she was ready to pack up and off at a month's notice, and never set foot again in smoky London, if she could help it, as long as she lived.

Things fall out very often *for* us, as well as *against* us, in this life, only we don't always keep quite a right-reckoning. Aunt's heart was set on "The Briers"—on ending her days, if she could, as happily as she began them. But she had granted a long lease of it, with tenant's option of continuance, from seven years to fourteen, &c., &c.; and, "the Onslows loved the place," Peter said; "and he couldn't tell—perhaps they might leave it—perhaps they might

not—sometimes he thought they would, as Caroline was married, Harry gone to India, and it must be rather dull for them now.”

Peter judged well—the doubt about it redoubled Aunty’s love for it ; and when she heard that possession would be given her at Michaelmas, she was like a wild thing with joy ; and next day the agents had No — Harley Street on their books, To Be Let.

But no suitable tenant turned up. The old house was sadly out of repair. It wanted new papering and painting throughout, the roof to be stripped, the front attics raised, the drains taken up, and the sun let into the kitchen. It would cost a little fortune. What was to be done ?

“ Sell the lease, out and out,” advised the agents, “ and, so, get rid of all further trouble.”

“ A good thought ! Yes, and all the old rubbish with it,” cried Aunty, “ that we shan’t want to take with us into Herefordshire.”

"Precisely so."

One, Mr. Dobskey, a great merchant, with Mrs. D., and the young ladies and gentlemen, came in their barouche to view it.

Mr. Hookem was in waiting.

"In a sad state," whispered Dobskey. .

"Shocking!" with one voice.

"Capable of improvement," admitted Hookem.

"Cost, though, a devil of a deal, wouldn't it?" demurred D. junior.

"Well worth it," (aside,) "get it for what we were talking of. There's a noble dining-room! Dined twenty-four often easy. And where find three better reception-rooms anywhere?"

"Not bad," Mrs. D. must allow.

"Furnished and fitted up, as *you* would do them"—and Hookem's eyes brightened—"I'll bargain, they'd challenge all May Fair."

"If the best bed-rooms were only a little larger," gently murmured Mrs. D., "See, Tom can almost touch the ceilings?"

"Yes—but look at the reception-rooms! The *haut ton* don't care a fig how they sleep. There's a client of ours—you know him, I daresay, very well—Lord Mountgarret;—when he goes down to Sloslands, always sleeps in a little room, he calls 'the bower,' up at the top of the house, not seven yards square."

That Tom believed. For when he was down in Borks last autumn, shooting, the Colonel's bed-room was the funniest little bit of a snugger you ever saw. For his own part, he agreed with the Colonel—hang your state-bed-rooms!"

Well, Dobskey would give what he had said—two thousand pounds for the lease and fixtures, and not a farthing more.

"Say two thousand two hundred, and the house was his."

"Not one farthing more."

"Mr. Hookem was very sorry he could not take it. Then, they must go to the sale."

And so Dobskey did. But somebody ~~was~~ was there, too. And the Mr. Somebody being determined to get it, and Dobskey being determined he should not, after a spirited competition down went the hammer—and Mr. Dobskey was declared the purchaser, at £2,300.

How Hookem and Aunt Barbara did laugh together about it! But Dobskey could afford it; and, even at the price he had got it for, he could build a new house out of it if, he liked, and still stand at a fair rent.

But, what was better—after all costs paid, there was a nice little addition to Aunty's snug savings in the four per cents; "so that when she died, and her annuity fell with her, there would be enough," she said, "to pay all her just debts, bury her decently, erect a marble monument, if they pleased, to her many virtues, and leave a something over for any one she happened to love best."

Never had Lucretia, since her mother's

death, enjoyed a day's true happiness like that ride from Harley Street to Rexbury.

"Isn't it a little paradise?" cried Aunty, letting down the glass on her side, as now, on the hill-top, within half a mile of the village, she strained her eager gaze to take in all the dearly-beloved old objects that came smiling and nodding at her at every turn.

"And not a thing altered, I declare—just as it all was twenty years ago." And, now at the hill foot:—"Bless me, love!—look, look—as I live, there's Peter himself, or his ghost, waving his hat—there—down by 'The Six Bells'—didn't I tell you so?—didn't I say he'd be the first to bid us welcome? Yes, there he is! and, I declare, looking hale and handsome as ever!"

CHAPTER XIV.

PETER'S PORTRAIT.

Does the reader know anything of the country about Ross, and ten miles round it? If so, he or she, no doubt, treasure in their recollections, if they have artists' eyes and hearts, some pleasing thoughts pictorial.

Such eyes and heart as Aunt Barbara's, in Harley Street, might well cast longing looks often, in thought, towards dear old REXBURY. How such a soul as Aunty's, made for the country, could have been the gay, contented, happy soul it was in Marylebone, can be accounted for in one way only—Aunt Barbara's heart did not beat

for itself alone. To have seen her, busy and blithe alike at all times, but when sickness or others' sorrows would make her pull a long face now and then, anyone would have thought, Harley Street and Miss Barbara Woodford were on the very best terms together,—perhaps just at the moment when, in fact, her heart was thinking, what worlds she would give, if she had them, to be only then at Rexbury.

But the prize in prospect bears us along astonishingly, however long, or steep, or dull, the way may be, and Aunt Barbara, as she often stood dreamily measuring the length, breadth, and depth, of the opposite houses from her brother's drawing-room window, waiting for his return from Leadenhall Street; and, far over their dark, dingy heads, espied dear old Rexbury in the distance, and "The Briers" lovingly beckoning her on about a bow-shot past the village,—had, to her taste, sweeter companions in her solitude, than all the

General's groaning-card-baskets, put together, could afford her. And now, the end achieved, the prize in hand, never was there an instance, where the reality equalled the anticipation, more palpable, than when, standing arm-in-arm with Peter on the little velvet lawn, while the village bells were pealing forth their joyous welcomes;—Aunty looked proudly round her, the monarch of all she surveyed; and, turning to Lucretia, asked her, “if she would be kind enough just to tell Humphrey to go and order the horses to be put to again, to take them back to Harley Street?”

Thinking of something else at the moment—it might be about poor Fred—Lucretia did not quite take what she meant, and turned pale; whereupon, Peter entreated, “that Aunty would remain one night with them, at any rate, to rest the poor beasts, and then she could start off again by cock-crow,”—which enlightening Lucretia, Aunty gave in; and, suffering herself to be con-

ducted to the tea and other nice things all ready in the boudoir :—the first cup was enough—" the boy might go back to Ross—now she was there, she might as well stay, and put things a little in order—it would be easy enough to have another pair over when they wanted them—how deliciously sweet the butter was—she hadn't eaten such a meal for seven years !"

" Let's see," remembered Peter ; " that's just about the time, and a little over, isn't it, you were here last ?"

" Yes—when the Onslows first came down."

" And not eaten a meal, to speak of, since ?"

" Whether or no," smiled Aunty, " we shan't be returning to-night. So, Clough had better, help Esther up with some of the boxes—must get out our night-caps, at all events, if we're to stop a night or two."

It was a full hour after his usual bedtime, when Peter, sure as a gun that they

anything else ; till the thought of " The Briers," the home of her childhood, where the happiest years of her life had been spent, urged on her by Peter Borrington's periodical persuasions, got such a hold, that it only wanted some congenial soul to come and say, "let us, hand in hand, and heart in heart, go and make it our home together,"—and she was ready to pack up and off at a month's notice, and never set foot again in smoky London, if she could help it, as long as she lived.

Things fall out very often *for* us, as well as *against* us, in this life, only we don't always keep quite a right-reckoning. Aunty's heart was set on " The Briers"—on ending her days, if she could, as happily as she began them. But she had granted a long lease of it, with tenant's option of continuance, from seven years to fourteen, &c., &c. ; and, " the Onslows loved the place," Peter said ; " and he couldn't tell—perhaps they might leave it—perhaps they might

not—sometimes he thought they would, as Caroline was married, Harry gone to India, and it must be rather dull for them now.”

Peter judged well—the doubt about it redoubled Aunty’s love for it ; and when she heard that possession would be given her at Michaelmas, she was like a wild thing with joy ; and next day the agents had No — Harley Street on their books, To Be Let.

But no suitable tenant turned up. The old house was sadly out of repair. It wanted new papering and painting throughout, the roof to be stripped, the front attics raised, the drains taken up, and the sun let into the kitchen. It would cost a little fortune. What was to be done ?

“ Sell the lease, out and out,” advised the agents, “ and, so, get rid of all further trouble.”

“ A good thought ! Yes, and all the old rubbish with it,” cried Aunty, “ that we shan’t want to take with us into Herefordshire.”

and worthy man ; and, " what need he to have been more," as Aunt Barbara used to say to everyone, " what more, indeed, though they had made him an archbishop ?"

Aunty ought to have been a judge. They had known each other from childhood. Some said, there had been talk once of the tender passion between them ; but whether it was, that Miss Barbara was obliged to please her brother, or that Peter was too poor to do without his fellowship, nobody could tell for certain. All they could say was, that never was Peter in such high key as when Barbara Woodford was coming down, and never seemed Barbara so dull and 'down as when she was going to say good-bye to Peter.

But Peter Borrington, with all, was but man. No model-parson was Peter, such as some enthusiasts think they know of, and draw such saint-like portraits of, for our instruction. There was nothing divine about him but his doctrines, and those only so

not—sometimes he thought they would, as Caroline was married, Harry gone to India, and it must be rather dull for them now.”

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and 'hunt the slipper,' and 'forfeits,' and 'puss in the corner,' did Peter, as his Michaelmas goose, and his pancakes of a Shrove-Tuesday.

And open-handed as open-hearted—ask the poor. It was only wonderful how he did it all with £400 a-year, about, and his hand always in his pocket.

And, then, so learned, yet so humble. A prize-man of his college, yet the verriest village lout could understand him as well as his own mother.

Handsome? Tastes do differ so about beauty; not what some would so consider, taking the Apollo for their model, far less Adonis. Aunt Barbara thought him beautiful! but she was the only person perhaps who ever said so. In height, he was about an inch under six feet; he carried himself well, as one come from a good stock; there was the right blood in him; gentleman was stamped on him from top to toe; his features were, on the whole, good enough for a

man, and regular, and intelligent, and pleasing, but not such at all as sentimental young ladies draw in Albums. He was better looking with his hat on than off, for he had a short, thick, bristly, head of hair, which made Aunt Barbara once give him, for a birthday present, a tortoiseshell pocket-comb; ever since which, they said, he had been so proud of it, he would take off his hat, of a hot day, before he presented himself, and pass the comb over the stubs, "to arrange them a bit," he said, "it was so refreshing!"

The fact is, Peter's beauty was of a sort to a great extent independent of his person. That was well enough, looked at in the right light. But it was not face or figure in Peter that so charmed Aunt Barbara. "She hardly knew what it was. She had closely scanned him a hundred times; and there were certain stern moments she could remember, and brow-bendings, and brow-beatings, she had seen him put on,

when he seemed quite plain to her. But they were all gone the next minute, when the cloud had passed over ; and then there was a generous fire, and twinkle of the eye, a genial smile of the mouth, and a bright beaming of nothing but love, and kindness, and genuine goodness, all over his face, that made her wish he was her brother, that she might run and throw her arms round his neck, and kiss him—it made her feel so happy !”

Such was Peter’s portrait, as Aunt Barbara drew it. Making allowances for a little excusable partiality, it was pretty true to the original ; and, so, may stand for the reader’s approval, as well as any.

CHAPTER XV.

THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

A PRETTIER village than was Rexbury, England had not to boast of. What railways have done for it is a matter of opinion; they are not remarkable for improving rural beauties. Increased content does not always follow multiplied availabilities. They do say, some of the old stagers thereabouts, that Peter nearly broke his heart when they got their line and little station about two miles from the vicarage. He had a hard matter to prevent the spirit of improvement pulling down that, and building up another

of bright red brick, with stone facings, in its place; and clearing away most of the old trees and shrubberies round and about it, and laying it naked and open to the road, which was more healthy, they said; although he was ready to prove to them, "that his predecessor, Alan Lee, lived and flourished for more than thirty-five years there, without an ache or pain to hurt him; and look at him—ask Daniel Ratcliffe, how often he had had him, Peter, on his books?"

Thanks to Aunt Barbara, and old memories, "The Briers," like herself, stood staunch to the good old pattern, the pattern by which her best joys of life had been cut, out and worked on, from her cradle; and catch her altering it for all the world! Look, what a frightful affair they had made of "The Bury"—hewing down all the beautiful old trees about it, and chopping, and changing, and, turning and twisting, and robbing, and borrowing; till there it was, more like a

child's card-house and grounds in a toy-shop than anything else.

No, Aunt " wanted none of their great says. Cut away all her beautiful firs, and laurels, and rhododendrons, and rose-trees, for the sake of a 'carriage drive,' as they called it—carriage fiddlesticks! Let them pull up at the gate, as she did, and *walk* through the flowers, and among the bees and the butterflies, not gallop past them as if they were going to sting them. And, if it rained, and they hadn't an umbrella, and were afraid for their best clothes, they could turn back home if they liked, till a finer day—she should be happy to see them at any time. What wanted she, either, with a 'hall' instead of a passage? Give her that—and look at her little dining-room—how would they match? Wasn't there ample room, and to spare, then as it was, for all the true roast-beef hearts she should ever collect round her? Go into " The

Bury" drawing room—36 by 24—splendid ! so it was,—but could you fancy it was meant to live in ?—meant for anything but stiff parties ? Turn her little bay-windowed snugger into the like, and she wondered how soon Peter would be looking at his watch, and fidgeting to be off ; instead of her never being able to get him away till it became quite scandalous sometimes, he wouldn't hear the clock strike !"

No, not if it had been to save Joe Pock's life, would Aunt Barbara have had that old brown thatch stripped off "The Cottage." Joe had tried hard for it more than once, and one day almost got the Vicar on his side, he thought ; but, when it came to the point, Joe might just as well have supposed Peter would let him pull down the church-tower, coeval with the conquest, and replace it with another of his own design and workmanship, as be guilty of such an act ! and it was very foolish of Joe to be cross about it.

"If the place should ever be burnt down, don't blame him, that was all," bargained Joe.

"To comfort him, Auntie would have it well insured. And, before the frosts came, he certainly should fresh-tile the piggeries, and build her a new pigeon-house over the granary."

Joe, come to the truth of it, had no reason to grumble. For six weeks or more, before the ladies came down, he and his mates had had the place pretty much to themselves, so that Peter almost began to fear at one time he should never get them out; till at last he was obliged to be quite sharp, when one day, planting his hands on his hips, Joe took a close measurement of the roof with his eye; and then Peter saw he must be serious; and, taking a letter from his pocket, just received from Harley Street, Joe perceived clearly, after a little, that, as the ladies were coming down next week, they must have a roof over their heads, to

receive them under, at all events ; “ but that then, if they liked to have it pulled off, they could please themselves ; Peter could not tell how that might be—certainly *he* should say nothing to hinder their sleeping with the sky only over them, if the weather held fine, and they found it pleasant.”

Though they often called it “ The Cottage,” “ The Briers” had more conveniences and comforts in it than many a house of far greater pretensions, to which its old-fashioned irregularities, as a building, not a little conduced. It stood charmingly, on a gentle slope, about a furlong from the road, screened in on either side by quite a little forest of firs and laurels and rambling shrubberies ; except where, here and there, the hand of art had left a cunningly manœuvred opening through which peeped the wooded hills in the distance, dipping their bending boughs, as it seemed, into the clear waters of the beautiful river that laved their feet ; and which Aunty dear used

often to call Lucretia to come and look at with her from her bed-room window—it was so refreshing! and then ask her, “if she ever remembered to have seen anything half so much so in all Marylebone?”

And then Lucretia would draw Auntie into hers;—and, there to the left, tell her, “that was the village of dear old Rexbury, she loved to talk so much about when they were in Harley Street—there, happier than ever, taking its noontide nap under wing of its grey old church, in that beautiful leafy hollow; and there, on the right, was the parsonage house, just as she knew it last, not a brick altered—did she see it?—yes, and Peter Borrington, too, the very same Peter, she’d be bound, there at that moment, in his bay-windowed little study, thinking of them, and planning some new scheme of happiness for them all;—and there, far away, beyond the wooded hills—how many miles was it—over there—straight as the crow would fly:”—and then a mist seemed

to come before here yes, and she could not go on. "Yes, yes—Aunty saw—Aunty understood;—but she would not change rooms with her for all that. From hers she had a peep at the stile over which Peter must get—there by the turnips—when he came across for a short cut—that was more than she had."

But Rexbury had other charms beside its picturesque. It rejoiced in a nice little neighbourhood. Its land was not swallowed up by one or two great owners only. It had its snug place here, and its snug place there, its squirearchy on every side; so that, though the great dons were far away, the little ones fared very well.

This suited Aunt Barbara exactly. She was a sociable creature, and had no idea, because she grew her own fruits and vegetables, of eating them all by herself; or, because she raised her own poultry and pigs, of never seeing any faces but theirs. It was her glory, that at Rexbury she could

be as sociable, or as shut-up, as she liked; that she could mope at home, if so minded, like an owl in its ivy, or, in the pony-chair with Lucretia, and cards in hand, make all hearts around them happy by the half-dozens.—

“What, in pity’s name, would be the good, love,” she would say to her, “of having down a sweet, pretty, new bonnet like this from Madame Jupons, and none but Peter to look at it, and he always putting down vanity? Yes, and brought home a new hat for himself, I happen to know, only last Saturday, from Ross, dear. Please to answer me this:—what made Robinson Crusoe the shocking sloven he was?”

“Perhaps, because he had but one suit.”

“Nonsense! If he had wits for one, he had wits, and ways, too, for ten.—Because he lived, love, where there was no neighbourhood. Don’t you remember, how, directly he got into society again, he shaved and dressed himself like a gentleman, and

looked quite human?—Now, isn't this a becoming style? I think it suits me, love, precisely."

In short—for it is by no means my intention to give the reader more of Aunt Barbara's REXBURY daily doings, than may strictly appertain to our story—in short, "The Briers" seemed made for dear Aunt, and Aunt for "The Briers"—and the life she led there was a pattern for country ladies.

"How a pattern?"

"Barring the common casualties, Aunt Barbara was always happy."

"Happy—how nice! And how, pray, attained she to that?"

"She was never idle; the day was never too long for her; she had never time to be dull; did her duty to the best of her power; kept early hours; was out much in the open air; walked a great deal more than she rode; lived temperately; minded her own business; never meddled with

others'; had a smile for, and from, all she met; was in peace with God and man; enjoyed good health; and put by something handsome every year out of her income.

Of course, there is always a something wanting in this life. Had it been otherwise, Aunt Barbara's hopes of an Hereafter would not have been as precious to her as they were. No one enjoyed the present more than she did; and only so, because she used that present well, used it for the purposes it was given her for—for the sake of the crowning glory of the future.

Six months had safely settled them at "The Cottage," as if they had been there for a century. Peter was quite right. It was a life-long lease Aunty had taken of it, in her heart, before she had well unpacked her trunks; and nothing had happened—on the contrary—to make her regret her decision.

What was the something, then, that was

wanted to make Aunt Barbara's happiness perfect.

It seems a small matter to speak of; yet, it cost dear Aunt many a wakeful thought.

At last she confided it to Peter.

"If I could only see a little colour come again into Lucretia's cheeks?"

"Is that all?" returned Peter. "Have patience."

"And such sweet roses as used always to be there, too."

"Patience."

"Poor faded roses! Not so much as a little bud now, try ever so."

"Patience."

"Till how long, pray? I think I have almost had patience enough?"

"Till she see her babe in her lap, crowing up in her face, and calling her mother. If that don't bring them back, nothing will."

Aunt took courage. A new light burst on her. Yes—*mother*—yes, that would do it! Oh, what a dear, good, kind, sensible,

thoughtful creature was Peter! He a bachelor! He ought to be the father of a whole generation; and, running up, full of it, to Lucretia, there ensued a little scene, which, if the reader can conceive, she may; if not, the day may come, perhaps, that she will; and to that it can be left, better by far so than failing at it here.

And now, if Aunty's hands had been idle before, came enough to keep them out of mischief in all conscience. Poor Peter got sadly neglected, so much so, that at last he absented himself for two whole days and a half, which frightening Aunty, she sent Humphrey over with a little note, to know if he was in the land of the living? and, if so, whether he could spare time to come across—as it was not more than four miles between them—and give her his opinion of some curious old port Barnes had just sent her down, some of the same pale-yellow seal that her brother, the General, was so fond of—but it wanted such delicate decantering!

And then she would shew him a nice, long, affectionate letter they had had from Sophy Woodford—who, by the bye, would not be Sophy Woodford long—telling them all about how they were going on at Hillborough and Reddington ; both Timothy and Andrew, by all accounts, making money by hatfuls ; and Betty riding the high-horse with a vengeance at Blythe House. She had quite a little budget in store for him ; and some of his favourite college-dumplings for dinner, too—at six to a moment.”

Auntie made sure, that, by mentioning “ six to a moment,” she should see him at five ; and so it turned out—Peter wisely conceiving, that, if there was any business to be done, best get it over before dinner—“ duty always before indulgence.”

The “ budget ” contained three principal items, viz :—

1st.—Whether the school-house, with those little lattice windows, and with a roof Roberts could almost touch with her ruler,

was healthy for the children, stewed up there for hours with the door shut? And what it would cost to build a new one?

2nd.—Whether her letter to Archibald Sharpe, Esq., solicitor of Hillborough—in the rough draft of which the vicar had had a hand—ought not, in due courtesy, to have been answered by this time?

3rd.—What he, Peter, thought of Sophy Woodford's letter; and whether she, Aunt Barbara, should write to brother Andrew?

No. 1 was quickly settled. "A new school-house? Stuff and nonsense! Squander her money that way? Why, they couldn't half fill the one they had got, as ought to be; no, and never should, go on as they were doing—the boys out astride on cart horses, half as big as elephants, before they could well walk; and the girls, half of them, not as tall as his walking-stick, always 'minding the baby.' Come next year, and any of them died of suffocation, Joe should

throw out a new window, that he promised her."

No. 2—"There could be no question about. But there was a bright spark, mind, in his candle last night—patience."

No. 3.—"Let them sit down out of the sun, and read it over again; and, please, without comment."

"Well—that was all natural enough. The tree was known by its fruits. A Westminster was not a Barbara Woodford. What was there to be astonished at? Timothy was making money by hatfuls—lucky Tim! So was Andrew—lucky Andrew! What time had Tim for anything else?—poor Tim! Or what time had Andrew either?—poor Andrew! But everybody said, Andrew still loved Lucretia best of them all, and would do something handsome for her, if he didn't put it off too long—before he died. He had been very sick and ailing since he had been at Reddington. Now he could have periwinkles and pancakes for his supper

every night if he liked, he was so mean and stingy he would make all of them about him live on red herrings and onion dumplings if he could. With as good as Two Hundred Thousand pounds of his own, he didn't look worth five shillings in the world, and was little better than a bag of bones. Poor Andrew!—the fruits in possession had robbed him of all their sweets."

"As to Betty, at Blythe House, she ate, drank, and slept, much as usual. Nothing seemed to hurt her. She was tough as a cord; and would outlive them both, and come in for everything one of these days, so everyone said."

"Still, if it were Sophy's case, she would make bold and write to Andrew, for he was the only one of them had a grain of anything like heart in his bosom."

The question was—"should Aunt do so?"—but, dinner being on table, Peter "would think of it;"—and so no further mention was made of it again.

The day—the hour drew near—Aunt Barbara's heart beat double. Aunty an old maid, any more than Peter an old bachelor? O Peter, Peter! what could you have been thinking of?

The doctor's roan mare came galloping like mad through the village.—Merciful goodness! what now?—Pulled up, breathless, at “The Briers.”—Was taken by Humphrey round into the stables.—There was eating her head off for more than twelve whole hours;—when out Humphrey brought her again, grinning for joy.—Up jumped the doctor into the saddle, looking as if he hadn't had any sleep for a month—and, turning her head for home, off scampered master and mare—“Mrs. Woodford had got a Boy!!!”

“Who shall attempt to describe it?”

To have seen Peter Borrington, when it reached him, rushing through the street, panting for breath, and witnessed the hubbub and to-do that ran from house to house,

any one would have thought that births in Rexbury must be rare events ; whereas, not six hours before the doctor was called out of his bed to " The Briers," Bridget Hooper, the wife of farmer Goddard's carter, had been put to bed with as fine a bouncing boy as Dan Ratcliffe had ever looked on ; and, yet, nobody seemed to be in the least out of breath about that.

Aunty's state defies description ! Now it was all over, the blood had come back to her face, and there was a wild delight and exultation about her, that at any other time Peter would have thought it his duty to examine into ; but, the truth is, he was so inclined to crow and cut capers himself, that, merely squeezing hands, he held his tongue, feeling, possibly, that that was the safest way just then of dealing with it, and, probably, of steering clear of making a booby of himself, too.

And now mightily amused was Aunty to hear the questions he put to them. " He was

not much of a judge of babies ; but, as far as he could see, he seemed a fine little fellow !”

“ Is’nt he an angel ?” asked Aunty.

Peter “ did not know—he had never seen one yet. He seemed very like other little mortals ! !”

Aunty sighed. “ It must be your greater care, then, to watch well and guard his steps.”

Could it have been a tear in Peter’s eyes at this ? Nurse Churchill thought so. If so, it was a tear of pride and joy, as, stooping over her lap, he muttered something, sounded to her—for she caught a word or two—very like a blessing, and then left the room in silence.

“ Yes, bless him ! and he would be blessed the sweet darling ! blessed by such lips as those ! Wasn’t it wonderful to hear how much he—and a bachelor—knew about it all ? Where he got all his knowledge from, she, Jane Churchill, couldn’t think. He seemed to know almost as much as she did.

She knew how it was :—wasn't he everywhere, where he was wanted — where he ought to be?—seeing with his own eyes, and hearing with his own ears, and treasuring up with his own heart and understanding? Yes, that was how it was he knew so much. Yes—and mark her—he would be blessed, sweet darling ! blessed by good man like that. If he were babe of hers, that was the blessing she would wish for him—the blessing of a righteous man as he was.”

Not a cleverer fellow at his craft than Daniel Ratcliffe. The Queen's own physician—and that was very well-known — had once asked him his opinion. It was upon a case in consultation ; and he had as good as copied Dan's own prescription for it ; and, before he left, told them all—“ they need not send ever again for him—hadn't they Daniel Ratcliffe ?”

Mrs. Frederick Woodford was in luck's way. Before a month, as he had promised her, she was up and about again, looking so

interestingly lovely, that two or three of the Squires' wives, round and about, not yet mothers, were heard to wonder, "whether all blondes looked as beautiful over their bassinets as Lucretia Woodford?"

What credit might be due, in the matter, to Madame Jupon, and the pretty getting-up caps, &c., &c., that came tumbling in one after the other by Aunt Barbara's orders, regardless of expense, we know not, though we may have our own opinion about it.

And Peter had his, too.

"And I'll tell you what that is," whispered Aunty; "you think I don't know?"

"It is possible."

"Just what you were saying to yourself, word for word?"

"That, however art improved nature."

"Yes, that's it—'however art improved nature'—how spiteful!—if the said Squires' ladies really and truly *would* look as lovely as Lucretia Woodford—really and truly, mind—look as interestingly beautiful over

their bassinets—why, the sooner they got them, the better for their hubbies, wasn't it?"

"You conjuror!" cried Peter. "Now go and tell them, can't you, and get the gown torn off me among you?"

Yes, a beautiful, young, widowed mother, with her first-born babe at her breast, is an interesting sight! and, with such loving eyes and hearts as on all sides surrounded her, Lucretia might carry off the palm in welcome, and Peter's gown sit quite safe on his shoulders, think or say what he liked about them.

All the same, Aunty had no intention of making mischief. "And now would he be quiet, and take a lesson of her at nursing? or, in plain truth, he handled a baby shockingly!"

"You call that nursing, do you?" laughed Peter—tossing, and teasing, and kissing, and squeezing him about in that way? "And, in pity's name, look there at his poor mother, shuddering to think what's to become of her, if you eat him up all alive, too."

But Aunty went on ; till, snatching him from her, it was now Peter's turn to show her. And show her he did—Jane Churchill, in the background clapping her hands and nearly dancing for joy—show them such a bit of fun, that Lucretia laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

“ There — now take him again,” said Peter to Aunty.

“ Got him safe, are you sure? Good-bye little master”—and out came the little arms, and then such a doleful cry, was enough to pierce any heart but Aunt Barbara's.

“ Cruel, cruel !” cried Peter, snatching him again into his arms. “ Wouldn't she let his own Peter have him?” and laying him on his knees, there he remained, quiet as a lamb, smiling up in his face, while Peter rocked away, and sang lullaby after lullaby ; till falling off into a sweet calm sleep:—“ now take him Churchill,” said he ; “ he'll be a right-tempered boy, I'll warrant —only know how to handle him.’

Joy, joy—a letter from Archibald Sharpe. It was very short.—“ He regretted that unavoidable circumstances had prevented him answering Miss Woodford’s letter sooner. They had read in the papers of the birth of Mrs. Frederick Woodford’s son, and hoped that both were doing well. He was now instructed to inform Mrs. Woodford, that her brother Timothy, in conjunction with Andrew, and Elizabeth, her sister, had determined to continue to her the annuity of one hundred a-year, granted to her by her late father ; her receipts for which at Messrs. Prescott’s would be all that would be required, as usual. He was desired to convey to her, likewise, their best wishes on the occasion of the christening, with an earnest hope, that she would bring up her child in the fear and admonition of the Lord ; and, when he came to know the value of money, to lay up in time for the rainy day ; that, should it ever overtake him, he would

be saved from evil ways, and never need to be a burden on his kinsfolk."

"From Betty that," sighed Lucretia, straining her baby to her bosom, and bending over him, to conceal her tears.

"He ever come to beggary," cried Peter, his eye kindling, "with a forehead like that?" "Tut, tut, Master Archibald! Patience, man! You'll all be glad of a little finger, or a nod from him, one of these days, or my name's not Peter Borrington. Take the filthy lucre?—yes, I should think so, take it, and say thank ye. Cast it back in their teeth?—that would be valorous? Yes, may be, that's what you'd do, Miss Woodford, no doubt of it—you are so very independent! You don't see, I suppose, that we can snap *our* fingers, too, now? Tut, tut—he go begging ever? Patience, just for a little, if you please—just till that forehead expands a bit—that head and heart come to know each other well—and those hands are big enough to fight their battle;—

then see if he won't pay them back every copper of it, with compound interest !”

In due course came the christening. It was solemnised at church, on a Sunday, in the midst of the congregation, a brother clergyman from Ross, much esteemed by them all, performing the service, and the Vicar preaching.

It was a day long to be remembered at Rexbury ! Many circumstances combined to make it full of interest ; not the least of which was, that, though Aunty had not failed to let sister Betty know when it was to take place, no notice of any sort had been taken of her communication by any member of the family. But for this, it had passed off without a cloud.

As it was, Peter “ found solace in his old friend, *patience* ; and, so must they.”

And so they did, as well as such hearts could. And now Aunt Barbara's hospitality was princely !

“ If there was a stomach went to bed

hungry that night in all Rexbury, it would be its own fault," said the doctor.

"Not a stomach should, if she could help it," assented Aunty.

"Not a stomach did, that Humphrey Scott would vouch for."

And nothing lacked the festive board, either in Aunty's own little dining-hall. It flowed over with good things, love over-flowing all! Peter had decantered the yellow seals himself, and it is sufficient to say, they were worthy of the occasion.

And now, the cloth drawn, it devolved on Peter Borrington to propose the toast of the day:—

Health, Long Life, And Happiness, To
The Young Christian, Warren Woodford!!

And well did Peter do it!

His speech lasted ten minutes;—he never broke down once, quite astonished Aunt Barbara, made every heart at table thrill, every soul rejoice in its baptismal rights, brought the glad tears into his mother's

eyes—and sent Christian baby-boy back, blessed, to his little bed !

Of course, Peter stood first god-father ; Major Woodford, a younger brother of Aunty's, by proxy, second ; and Aunt Barbara, godmother. The decision, as to the name, whether it should be Frederick, or Peter, cost Aunty hours of anxious doubt. Left to herself, she would have had it Peter ; but Peter fancied that Lucretia leaned naturally to Frederick.

Peter was wrong for once.

The name Lucretia wished for, at heart, most, was Warren. It was her mother's maiden name, and, next to Fred, she loved it above all others. Fred she dared not have always on her lips. " Yes, it should be Warren."

Peter perfectly coincided. " He liked the name exceedingly !"

" And so did dear Fred. He would have had it so himself, she knew. Yes, yes, it should be Warren."

CHAPTER XVI.

PETER'S PRINCIPLES.

IN obedience to the requirements of our story, will the reader have the kindness to clear at a bound the years intervening between the long lace-worked muslin frocks and cockade-caps, to the time when, standing with his hand on his Shetland pony's neck, if any one had asked Aunt Barbara, who was all to nothing the handsomest lad in Europe, and had expected any other than one reply :—" my godson there, Warren Woodford," he or she must have been blind indeed ?

His father was a handsome man, hand-

somer than nineteen out of twenty of his brother officers, they in full fig, and he in his undress ; Warren, as he grew up, bade fair to surpass his father in manly beauty as in moral grace.

The manly-beauty part of it nature claimed to herself, with that Peter and Auntie had nothing to do, beyond adorning it ; but they had to do, and a great deal, with the other, and that was the part shone brightest in Peter's eyes.

When this was the theme before Peter, and mother and aunt, in the pride of their hearts, would expatiate on his beautiful blue eyes, and roman nose and mouth, and fresh open countenance, and high forehead, and rich nut-brown locks, and graceful figure, Peter would look grave ; and when Lucretia asked him " why ?"—

" Because," he would answer, " you give all the praise to nature, none to his god-father and godmother."

There was meaning in this. It was not

as if good godfathers and godmothers offered every day. True, Peter had not even presented him yet with anything. He fully meant to redeem his pledge, when he stood for him at his baptism; and it had never entered into his head to make it up with his conscience, by a formal gift before he could read it, of a morocco-bound gilt-leaved Bible. He "made sure his mother was not without one, that would lie flat on the table before them, out of which she could read and teach him; and he read, too, when he was old enough, and be taught by; and then it was time to talk about buying one for himself—one for every-day use—one he could go and well search the inside of, at all hours, without fear of spoiling the out."

Nor had he advised Aunty to give him, before he could use them, a fine trumpery silver spoon and knife and fork in a velvet case. Hadn't she knives and forks and spoons enough in all conscience, that

wouldn't break in half when you used them, up in the plate-chest? Fiddlesticks! Must she be spending her money on him—let Richard Stubbs measure him for two new pair of thick, sensible shoes; not pretty paper-soled things like those he had on, from London, and he out in all weathers—keep him in if they could—and, the first shower, soaked up to the ankles; and take those ridiculous gossamer socks off his feet, and put him on some good stout useful cotton, fit for a boy, that he could tread out in like a little man—not dress him up like that—like a show-dummy in a baby-house window.”

But, although Peter had fallen thus short of ordinary godfathering and godmothering, in reserving the Bible-gift to a future day, and absolutely scouting the notion of edged tools, though of the precious metals, in infant hands—he did other things for his godson, as, in his conscience, he felt he was bound to do, and, as it happened, in his

heart, he willed and wished to do; so, might well take mother and aunt up short, when, absorbed in the contemplation of his beautiful eyes, nose, and mouth, they were going just the way to ruin the boy—if he could spare time from his play to give heed to them.

Stiff, however, as Peter might draw himself up occasionally, Peter's was a pleasant task! No one saw with prouder eyes than did Peter—no, not even his mother—that a handsomer and braver lad never sat pony's back than his godson Warren. Still, he always pulled a long face when that "rubbish" about good looks would slip out sometimes; which perhaps may account for why, after Warren came regularly to the parsonage for his lessons, you might have searched through the house in vain for such a thing as a looking-glass, except up in Dolly Finch's bed-room, from top to bottom.

It is a question indeed, whether Peter

Borrington had really seen his own face, except in his mind's eye, for ten years ; for before then he might have had some vanities. Why, Barbara Woodford knew as well as any one. Now he was always shaved &c. by barber Simms, and took for granted that Simms turned him out as he ought to be. Nevertheless, he would carry his tortoiseshell comb ; but Aunt, try ever so, could never catch him, no, not so much as stealing a side look at himself at " The Briers," though she turned her back sometimes on purpose, to give him a chance, if he wanted it.

He, Peter, " wanted no looking-glasses ; and, *pari ratione*, why should Warren, pray ? He had no beard to shave yet, had he ? And, when he had, let him send for the barber. And, if he was proud of his hair, have it cropped short like his, and so keep his head cool ; and, if it wanted tidying a bit now and then, carry a pocket-comb."

Peter despised the mere ornamentals, at

the expense of the usefals. He published a book once on it. It got some good reviews, but did not sell. He tried to prove what everybody knew, but no one cared to see. He might as well have written a duodecimo, to warn women against new bonnets, or school-boys of the head-ache at the pastry-cook's. His own house was a curiosity to behold. Some thought, that was the reason he remained single—all the young ladies that went to see him, "were seized," Dinah said, "with the shivers." Certainly the rigid stark-naked utility on the face of everything at the Parsonage was rather chilling.

Aunt Barbara, since she came down, had ventured a hint or two, and forced Lucretia to get her knuckles rapped several times; but he only smiled in his sleeve, and it was amusing to hear how peppery Aunty became, when, pinned in a corner as she thought him, he slipped through all their traps; and, lugging Warren off by the

hand, told him "to go, put on his thick shoes and old hat, and come along over the fields with him, and he would show him something really to be proud about."

Warren liked the Vicar's plain practicalities amazingly; Peter knew it, and, to fix the root still firmer, presented him with a copy of the "Ornaments."

Running home with it to his mother, Lucretia took the book from his hand, pleased enough to see those beaming blue eyes dancing for joy at the thought of his prize; for with it was there not the Cornelius Nepos, famously thumbed, too, in the other, of which Peter had been telling her such marvellous accounts that very morning, enough to make her proud?

"The 'Ornaments?'" cried Auntie, looking up from her work. "Mercy on us! what are they?" and turning over a leaf or two:—"pooh! is that all?" and pushed them from her.

"Nay, you are longing to read it through,

every word of it, as much as I am," smiled Lucretia.

"Here—look what it says at page 18, about dress," laughed Warren, opening it at the place.

"Dress!" cried Aunt, taking up the book again:—"heaven save us, what's all this?—Heard any one ever the like of ti?"—(reads).

"The increasing love of dress, especially, is the greatest scandal of our day. Where it is to end, is a question makes wise men tremble. It is sapping the foundation of all our noblest virtues; is opposed to all that is holy and good; is in direct defiance of all rational laws, human and divine; and, unless checked, will soon set at nought all that is decent, too. It corrupts and effeminizes our males; makes frights and figures of fun of our women, and prigs and puppets of our children. In short, it is becoming a public nuisance, and, as such, must be

“dealt with, like every other social evil, by
“the strong arm of the law, if needful.”

“There’s for you!” and tossing the
“Ornaments” on the sofa, as Peter entered
unexpectedly, without seeming to see him
—“that beats all the rest to atoms!—
‘makes frights, and figures of fun of the
women, and prigs and puppets of the
children’—does it?—Poor Mrs. Borrington,
I wouldn’t be you for a penny!”

“Offer her twopence, sir,” whispered
Warren, just loud enough to be heard;
“then see;”—and lucky for him, after a
chase through the room for it, he escaped as
he did without that box on the ears he was
within an inch of; when, running round to
the window outside, and holding his hands
piteously up to them, he put on such a look
of penitence, that Aunty gave in, on Peter’s
promising, in his next edition to leave out
that rubbish about women and children—
“what on earth did he know of them?—or,
at any rate, so modifying it, that her sex

could take up the book without blushing, A wonder to her he had sold even the copies he had.

Harmony being restored, "Now tell me," said Aunty, "how you liked my new water-colour drawing, by Mrs. Frederick Woodford? There is one opposite there, you see, of Copley Fielding, and another there, of De Wint's. Tell me now, which would get hung best, do you think, send them, without names, to Suffolk Street?"

"Do you mean," asked Peter, after a delighted scrutiny; "if I happened to be one of the hanging committee?"

"No, I did not mean that. But so be it, if you please?"

"Then," replied Peter, keeping his eyes fixed on the 'Woodford,'—"then I think I should say to the De Wint, and Copley Fielding—good friends, here is a work by a young sister artist, of great promise. Such merit must be encouraged. Neither you nor she can suffer damage by being seen in

each others company. Permit me, and I will so place you, that you may reflect credit on each other. There is your place, then, De Wint; there yours, friend Fielding; and just in that little space left between you, level with the eye, there yours, Lucretia Woodford. Are you not *all* of you proud? You may well be! Now let an impartial public judge between you. Strange, if there is not a little *sold* in the corner of all three before a fortnight."

"You flatterer," cried Lucretia; but the blood flushed her cheek as she spoke, and she became so excited, that Peter's keen eye saw in a moment his words had produced the effect he reckoned on; and turning from *cattle gathering under shelter from the storm*, to the spirited hand that had produced it, and pressing it warmly; "Yes, I see you understand me," said he—"go on—persevere—it will do—Rome was not built in a day; but, when it *was* built, it was a glorious work! go on;" and, turning

to Aunty, "how much pray for the cattle piece?"

"Fill me your hat to the brim with golden guineas—then come and we'll talk about it. But, law! what wants the like of you with ornaments?"

Two greater contrasts there could hardly be than the Parsonage drawing-room and "The Briers'"; but, wedded to the naked, useful as was Peter, it is very doubtful whether he would have liked, in his heart, to be greeting himself only and Dinah Finch, whenever he came to "The Cottage." Certain, he seemed to sit very much at his ease in Aunt Barbara's very comfortable dining-room—Turkey-carpetted all over, and hung all round so thick, there was hardly a foot of the wall to be seen, with a picking of the old General's collections would have sold for a small fortune; and in her charming little drawing room and boudoir too, crammed with luxurious delights, turn which ever way you would, and overflowing

with such exquisite gems of vertu and of art, that had, we suspect, with all his plainness, more charms for Peter than he had any conception of himself. Launch out as he might at the ornamentals, we shrewdly opine, that, away from Dinah, and the white holland overalls, those delicious chairs and couches of dear Aunty's, and curious cabinets, and consoles, and rare marbles, and marqueteries, and porcelains, and pictures, lost nothing in his secret soul for all his homeliness.

Anyhow, Lucretia was well content. Warren's progress was astonishing! All that the Vicar's study-shelves afforded him was open to his utmost craving. But Peter taught from another book, not of man's hands—the book of nature; and Warren used often to tell his mother, he learnt more in one walk across country with the Vicar, side by side, than a whole year could teach him, reading about it from morn to night. Had he been his father, Warren could not

have loved his tutor more than he did Peter Borrington ; one mind and the same heart seemed to hold them together, and, where tastes agree and true love is, how easily and joyfully all the rest will follow.

From almost as soon as he could talk and walk, Peter would draw him to his knee, and there hold him pinned tight, as by magic spell, that used to puzzle Aunt Barbara exceedingly, for not even had his mother such power over him. And then, piqued a little, she would see what she could do ; and, producing a new bat, or ball, or peg-top, try and coax him all she could to come to her, while Peter was there, and hear her tell him a wonderful new story ! And so he did for a little while ; till, getting fidgetty, and seeing a chance, off he slipped back again to his post by Peter's knee ; and the sparring there was between them about it was quite amusing to hear sometimes, occasionally threatening grave consequences. And then Lucretia

would interfere ; and Warren, put to the blush, would sidle up to Aunty, and, watching his opportunity, snatch a kiss unawares, which, making it all up between them, off he would scamper, leaving Peter to enjoy his triumph and make his peace for himself, as best it pleased him.

And on one of these occasions it was that final counsel was taken, as to whether Master Warren should be sent to school, or become a regular pupil of the Vicar's ?

There was a good deal that was true to be said on both sides ; and, if precedents went for anything, certainly home-discipline had not most to recommend it.

The question was—looking at the boy as he stood, how best go to work to make a man of him ?

Should it be a public, or a private school ?

“ My opinion is unchanged,” said Aunt Barbara—“ a public-school, by all means !”

“ If they did not fag, and knock them

about so," demurred Lucretia, changing colour. "So much depends on the boy himself."

"It does greatly," agreed Peter. "There is no positive rule in the matter. Disposition must be looked at. Send a mean, selfish, cowardly, cruel one, and a bully, to get it thrashed out of him, that's well, and the public-school will best do it. But don't say a noble-minded, generous hearted, kind-feeling boy won't turn out a good and great man from a private one. I know better. Constitutions differ widely, as well as creeds and colours. All boys can't fight their way alike. What would make a man of one, would break another. The noblest soul often suffers most, come to that test. Why should it so suffer? The weakest may go to the wall, driven there by the worst. Pluck's a good thing in its way, no doubt, and the spirit of self-reliance and manly courage and independence bright jewels in the casket. But so are truth, and patience,

and Christian-meekness, and kind-heartedness, too, in the battle of life, and come off great and glorious victors often. The tree must be judged of by its fruits. I have seen bitter and sweet from both ; but least of the former, and most of the latter, where—whether private, or public — the blessed truths of Religion had the chief hand in the Christian work.”

“ Yes, yes, we know that,” said Aunty, “ that’s all clear enough ; but you don’t mean ever to say, they are to be had at your private academies any more than at Rugby or Harrow ?”

“ I mean,” said Peter, “ only just this—that if Warren were my own boy, I would send him neither to one nor the other, but, under proper hands, educate him at home—yes, you may start—educate him at home—aye, and with pluck and spirit enough, to thrash the devil himself, if need be !”

“ Good gracious, you frighten us !” cried Aunty. “ How would you do that ?”

"I will tell you," answered Peter, "and in the language you are so fond of, if you will listen."

"Once upon a time there was a young mother, a widow, who had an only child, a boy of much beauty and promise. And she loved him as dearly as a mother could love her boy. But she was not like some fond, foolish mothers, who, dazzled by her love, could not see how to do her duty. She saw that it was time to be doing it. So, she called her friends and advisers together, and said to them:—Tell me how I shall best teach and make wise my son?"

And they differed in opinion, and said nothing.

Then turned she to a head with grey hairs at her side, a head had seen much in its day, and was grey before its time. And she said to this grey head:—"I am sorely perplexed. Tell me, I pray you, how I shall best teach and make wise my son?"

"What teach him?"

“That alone which he ought to know. The right way in which he should go, that he may never depart therefrom. I would build him a house *for ever*. What foundation should I have for it?”

“TRUTH.”

And he said no more did that grey-head to her then; for he saw that what he had said was sufficient.

And she went to her pillow that night, did that young mother, pondering the words she had heard.

And a bright vision appeared to her in her sleep. And it addressed her in tones of encouragement. And, as it vanished from her sight, she called to it, and said:—
“Tell me, I pray you, also, how I shall best teach and make wise my son. I would build him a house *for ever*. What foundation must I have for it?”

“TRUTH,” said the voice; and she sank to sleep, blessing its sweet heavenly music!
And next day she was up betimes. And

she fell on her knees, and besought the great God, that He would so help her, that she might teach her child nothing but Truth.

And going to the head with grey hairs, she placed her son's hand in his, and said to him :—" Will you help me to build him his house *for ever* ?"

" With God's blessing, yes," he answered, " I will help you so to build it. But I must be master alone—you must let me build the house as I will."

And years passed. And one day the mother came to them, and asked :—" How goes on the work of TRUTH ?"

And he answered her—" Behold !"—and then mother and son fell on each other's necks, and wept together for joy !

You might have heard a pin drop when Peter ceased speaking ; though, turning suddenly to seek for something she wanted in the next room, Peter was almost sure he saw a tear in Aunty's eyes.

As for the mother's, hers of course were brimming over.

"Well, well, then," said Aunty, coming back to her chair,— "I suppose it's not to be Winchester, after all? Did I ever get my own way in my life?"

"Why should it be?"

"Nor Dr. Rossiter's, at Cliffden?" said Lucretia.

"Why should it be either?"

"I see, I see," cried Aunty. "Clever that—only the Rev. Peter Borrington, M.A., Vicar of Rexbury, is to be our architect of The House To Last For Ever?"

"With his mother's consent, and Heaven's blessing, yes, just so," said Peter.

"Amen!—from the bottom of my heart—Amen!" said Lucretia.

"Is that settled?" sighed Aunty. "Well, amen, too, then, say I. So, now, come, and let's have a breath of fresh air in the garden, and see what that boy's after—some

mischief, I'll warrant—must and shall be flogged out of him.”

His home gained that night, Peter fell on his knees, and prayed long and earnestly. He prayed for pardon, if he had been too presumptuous. He prayed for the right knowledge, how to set about the work entrusted to his charge. He prayed for the materials to be given him in plenty, wherewith to build his house. And he prayed that in his hands it might prosper, as a work dedicated to Him, before all; — so that, beat the winds and the waves against it as they might, not the might and malice of Satan himself should ever prevail against it.

But a word or two more of the mother-teachings, patient reader, if you please, before Master Warren is consigned over, wholly and absolutely, to the Vicar's building.

CHAPTER XVII.

HEART OF OAK.

TILL Lucretia Woodford came to live with Aunt Barbara, the ornamentals of life were as unknown to her as they were to her sister Betty. Under her father's rigid rule, few vanities or vain-glories of any kind had ever gilded the sombre sameness of her miser-home. Peter Borrington's extreme plainness was excessive costliness, compared with Daddy's ; and, at first, the change rather startled than pleased her ; she was bewildered more than gratified ; lost rather in a maze of wonder, than delight.

Some clue to character may be gained by the effects of sudden changes on it, whether for better, or for worse. Under Aunt Barbara's roof and pleasant dispensation, a new life suddenly burst on her in all its brightest colours; but Lucretia was not dazzled by it. Her eyes and heart acknowledged it was all very beautiful! but her home, the home of her infancy, the home, spite of all sorrows, sanctified in her best affections by the memory of her mother, suffered nothing by the comparison. There were times, indeed, when would rise up before her, in the midst of all Aunty's allurements, that old home, stern and sombre as it was, and absolutely look bright and beautiful to her thoughts. And, then, Aunty's treasures lost sadly their attractions;—then seemed the old thread-bare black and drab carpet and rug of their daily little sitting-room, and its faded salmon-coloured moreen window-curtains, its old-fashioned ball-toed oval dining-table,

black as ink, its eight horse-hair-bottomed, straight-backed chairs, its grandam circular sideboard and cellaret underneath, the clumsy bureau bookcase opposite it, surmounted by Betty and herself, blacker than all,—oh, how immeasurably more precious to her than all the elegant Seddon's luxuries by which she was surrounded! For, with them, of the old friends, was there not always looking smilingly down on her that angelic face, to which she could go for certain consolation, sad at heart however she might be, when nothing else could give it her—her beloved mother's portrait? a priceless treasure in itself, to possess which, she felt she would gladly have given up all the rest of her father's countless riches.

But habit grows on us; and, after awhile, Aunt Barbara's lap of luxuries suffered less and less by the old-home-comparisons; till there is little doubt, if Peter Borrington had carried his playful threats into execution, and swept away the "trumpety," as

he called it, and made the place as bare of all but the stern usefuls as his own, Lucretia would have missed them almost as much as dear Aunty. Still, if Aunty's home, with heart of Aunty's in it to make it the home it was, had been as homeless-looking as was her father's, when first she entered it, Lucretia would have sat down well-content, and, as far as that went, known no wish beyond.

In fact, the mere ornamentals, of themselves, had little more charm for Lucretia than they had for Peter Borrington. But the Arts she loved passionately ! and, if Peter's judgment may be taken, was, in that very beautiful branch of them, water-colour drawing, herself no mean of proficient.

Aunty's collections were no daubs. There were some master-pieces among them of rare excellence, and these Lucretia prized above all her other treasures put together. Thoughts, burning thoughts, crowded her

mind as she gazed on them ; but she kept them to herself, little suspecting the anxious eyes that were watching all her movements, when, up in her work-room, with easel before her, she flattered herself she was doing it all so cleverly and quietly, and going on, in mind, step by step with her in her work of love; yes, and to the full as interested in the noble object she had at heart as that heart itself.

“Go on—persevere—it will do—Rome was not built in a day—but, when it *was* built, ’twas a glorious work ! go on,” said Peter.

Oh, how those words sank into her soul ! And she went on—and on—and on—still mounting steadily upward—looking at her “ten fingers” the while—looking at them so smilingly,—and thinking of Sophy, and wondering “whether she ever *should* see them clutch the sweet prizes her heart was set on ?”

It must be acknowledged, that, beyond

her love for the Arts, which, from the first time she could pretty well handle a pencil and brush, had taken such deep hold of her, that most of the spare hours she could steal from Betty's jealous rule, were passed in reading of the great masters out of books lent her by Mr. Plover and the doctor, and filling her portfolio with the fruits of her walks and talks with her darling Sophy Woodford, Lucretia was supremely ignorant of the manifold merits of dear Aunty's rare collections. Old *sevre* cups and saucers, for instance, worth, Aunty said, ten guineas the pair, puzzled her exceedingly! The blues were beautiful! and the fashion unique; but, looking at them with Peter's eyes, it seemed a monstrous price for a fine colour and a funny shape like that? Then, Aunty delighted in old china. The money she used to spend once in Hanway Yard was something fabulous! There was a set of very curious Nankin coffee-cups, excessively scarce, without saucers or handles,

which Aunty would not have taken millions for, though not a cup but was chipped or cracked;—these Lucretia once, when she was dusting them with a feather brush, happened to knock down one of, and smash to atoms; and, tossing the fragments into Martha's dust-pan, thought no more about it. Martha turned pale as death—but “it was not her doing, was it?” and, not missing it for some days, Aunty was as cheerful as usual, and the awful occurrence was forgotten.

One morning—oh dear! Martha thought the house would never hold them! And there is no telling whether it ever would comfortably;—till, setting off, unknown to anyone, at the top of his pony's speed to Ross, before you could have supposed it possible, in rushed Warren again, red as scarlet, with a little paper parcel screwed up in his hand; and, unfolding it before Peter:—“There,” said he, triumphantly, as he placed the new cup, of the prettiest

pattern he could choose, in Aunty's lap, "there—now you won't mind;" and, thinking he had settled it all, waited, with eyes dancing for joy, for the success of his diplomacy.

And it came. Fairly taken at all points—the whole thing was so irresistibly engaging, spite of its comicality, that, throwing her arm round his neck,—if Peter had had any doubt before, as to the sort of mother Barbara Woodford would have made, of one thing he felt very certain at that moment, "that there was small fear but that she would have spoilt any boy of her own, who had not had a sensible father."

But the least excusable case, it may be considered, of her utter ignorance of certainly what it would have been more to her credit had she had only a proper knowledge of, was, touching certain invaluable old sanscrit manuscripts, held in such profound estimation by her brother, the General,

that he never permitted any hands but his own to lay a finger on them,—though, hard-pressed by Peter once, Aunty admitted her doubts, as to whether he really understood them? which, after all, “was perhaps as well,” thought Peter to himself—“his ignorance being so very blissful!”—Herein, think as he might, Peter dared not support her for he was a scholar himself, and it would never have done—Warren looking on with both his great eyes open, drinking in every word he said—for him to have been in any sort wanting in that respect for learning which he was always showing him the immense importance of. And one day, when, for a great treat, Aunty brought them out, and laid them pompously on the table, and she, Lucretia, absolutely went so far as to call them “musty old rubbish,” Peter snatched up his hat, and, giving her such a look as she could never forget! and lugging off Warren with him by the arm, out he went, and

across home, without saying another word ; and would not let Warren return the whole of that day, to punish her.

As usual, she found solace in her work-room, then as at all other times of trouble ; and the comfort those occasional " escapes," as she used to call them, " from herself into herself more intimately," gave her, helped her far more on in her works of love, Peter knew very well, than had he sat by and sung her praises from morn till night.

It was a pretty, pleasant chamber, up stairs, that little work-room of Lucretia's. It had a bow-window, overlooking the lawn and shrubberies, the same as her bed-room, by which Joe Pocock had made it communicate by opening a door between them.

Only get Aunt Barbara to feel a pride in anything, and the pleasure, too, she had in it, was something charming ! Best, then, to leave it all to her. So she and Joe put their heads together, and, before they had

done with it, Peter himself would have hardly known the room again.

“ Let her see now—what more was required?—Its rosebud chintz curtains would do very well, send them to the calenderer’s. It must have a new carpet—some of the same moss-pattern, if they could get it, that was in her bed-room. And how many chairs had she got? Four. She must find her two more; and an easy one for Peter, though he pretended he didn’t like them, which was all rubbish!—or—let her think a moment—yes, a small sofa there, opposite the book-case, would be better, so it would—two could sit on that. And, then, the piano could go there—and her portfolio stand and globes there—and her easels there, for the left-light—yes, and her canterbury there—and there they must put a little round table—and a pembroke one with two flaps, would draw out and do for dining on at any time, if they liked, in the corner there.—And now she would go and

rout out all the old prints she could find. She knew she had four of George Morland's somewhere, and two or three pretty garden groups from Watteau; and, if she wanted more, she could paint plenty herself. But the moss-bud paper was not at all faded, and just matched the curtains. And, now, what else?—Oh, yes, a clock on the mantel-piece, that was a good thought, or they should have Peter at them to a certainty; yes, and a tripod in the corner, too, for that bust of Socrates he was going to give Warren, to keep them in order—then she would be perfect, wouldn't she?"

"Yes, and there she could sit and work, and draw, and paint, and read, and write, with Warren, or all by herself, to her heart's content, and nobody could interrupt her."

"Only I must insist on one thing," stipulated Aunty—viz., "that I have a free ticket of my own, to walk in—first knocking—how and whenever I please; and, moreover, of locking the door, and keeping

the key in my pocket, you understand, directly I see one rose less in those cheeks than I can count without my spectacles. As to Peter, I must be at liberty, also, to have a voice in *that* matter. He is not to be slipping in the back way, pretending to want to have a chat—that won't do for me—with Clough and Humphrey, and running up here at all hours he likes, understand that, too. Of course if Warren don't behave himself, it's a different matter; then I'll come up *with* him, and soon set *him* to rights; but, once for all, I'll have no cabinet counsels, of which I am not a member, hear that, Lucretia Woodford."

Safe and snug in her sanctum, shut up with her boy, or over her work, or easel, then beat Lucretia's heart most happy. It seemed more natural to her, to be at work, than to be living a fine idle lady, over an embroidery frame, or piece of crochet, in Aunt's drawing room. She once, in a fit of sadness, so sat for a week, lolling, and

lounging, and listlessly looking from object to object, trying to find in them a refuge from herself; till she got so unbearably disagreeable, not only to herself but to every one else that, rushing up stairs—first she bathed her head all over with cold water—then, throwing open her window, looked out, refreshed, into the broad, bold, honest face of nature; and, seeing nothing but smiles in it, study it as she would, thought to herself, “how foolish she was!—she, too, was work of His—why should she not also be glad and grateful?”

“Because you are not well employed, lady,” a bee answered, that was making the most of the sweet clematis and roses within a foot of her.

“Look at me, I am not sad,” said the swallow, skimming swiftly past, its mouth full for its young, and pointing to its nest under the roof, “we may not be idle, or our children, lady, would starve.”

“Come and help me,” called poor old

dame Clutton, from her patch of garden-ground opposite, half a stone's throw from the road, digging away at the hard earth with all her old strength of seventy years and more, the drops rolling down her face, but still cheerfully digging—"come and help me. Though seventy years old, and more, I must not, young lady, lay by; or winter will come, and the rest will be due, and, if I don't dig and plant now, how then shall I buy me a bit of sweet vegetables for my dinner."

"Holloa!" cried Peter, in amazement, starting suddenly out from the nut-walk, "what's come to us now, in pity's name? Hale and hearty young woman the like of you, with nothing to do at this time of the day but lolling and looking out of window. For shame! Get in with you, and go about your work, or see if I don't tell your Aunt Barbara!"—and, drawing in her head, abashed, poor Lucretia locked herself in—would not be at home that day even to

Peter—no, not even to her own dear boy;—but setting to work in good earnest, —next time Peter came, she showed him what she had been doing.

He started no more, nor did he exclaim, or look surprised. —“ Good,” said he only —“ go on—persevere—it will do ;”—and, so, the foundation was laid—the right seeds sown—for the sweet fruits he was sure would come, plentifully enough, all in due time, as that his name was Peter.

Thanks little industrious bee, and nimble swallow, and hard-working old dame, and good Peter, too, for your lessons ! Oh, how many a noble, but fainting, soul has been recalled to its duty, by thus fortuitously having the simple truth only told it, in such accents of real friendship and kindness !

This was before Warren went, for good, regularly to the Parsonage for his lessons.

“ Now Peter will think better of me,” said Lucretia to herself, “ for now I think a thousand times better of myself.” And,

so, the work went merrily on ; for, though a cloth was thrown over the easel, at present, when he came up, still Peter smiled—smiled in such a way, that she could read his thoughts easily enough—“ yes, go on,” they said, “ persevere ;” and on she went, he being perfectly contented to wait till, the cloth withdrawn, fruit time came—and he could take his fill.

“ Peter will think better of me now.”

And so Peter did ; and, in spite of Aunt’s lynx-eyes, would invent twenty little pretexts of one sort or another for dropping in more frequently than ever, and finding his way up stairs—work hours over :—and there, in an arm-chair, expressly appropriated to him, of studying still deeper his future pupil’s character, and his mother’s, too, all in one, with a penetrating, but loving ken, laid bare every impulse of their hearts.

And then, seeing his way clear, he would take a more active part, and venture to

point out to Master Warren certain things wanted a little reforming between him and his mother, if he meant to stand well in his opinion. And then he would — if Aunt Barbara was there — illustrate it by a suitable parable, or apt allegory. Then ask for pen or pencil, and do such wonders with them, made Warren stare!

And if he missed a day, and did not come up as usual, then knew Lucretia the friend, the sterling friend she had in Peter Borrington.

And when it was high time the mother's rule should be transferred to abler hands— Peter had thus wisely prepared the way; and, beyond an excusable tear or two, she kissed her boy's cheek, and, blessing him, let him go; and, setting to at her own work again, felt nothing of that load at the heart, which, with her hands comparatively idle before her, she used to dread would weigh her down when the time came that she must part with him from her sight.

"You know I am not going to leave you am I?" reminded Warren, throwing both arms round her neck; "only for a little while. You know I shall see you every day; and you are to help me of an evening with my lessons."

And now, her chief care taken from her, Lucretia formed and methodized a fixed plan, whereby to keep harmoniously working together her several daily duties. Her easel must not absorb too much of her time. There was the danger, and she would meet it. So, her village-visits and school teachings should be prolonged, and her needle move a little faster for them than it had done of late. Warren, too—there was no keeping pace with him, he grew so fast; his last set of shirts, not half-worn out yet, were nearly half up his arms already; and so were his night gowns—here was work in abundance. And, say what Peter liked, she "quite agreed with dear Aunty—best to be on the safe side—

he should begin his flannels that winter, as sure as she was his mother."

Then, what was to prevent her founding, in addition to the regular schoolings, a little picked class of the elder girls, got above the governess, to come to her twice a week, and read, and write, and sing the hymns for Sundays, and many other good things do, to make them some day useful wives and mothers?

Nothing; and, thinking for a moment—should she put on her bonnet, and go at once, and consult with Peter about it? No—they were at lessons—it would put him out—best go first over to Ross with Aunty, and see about the new Irish for the shirts. Then, they could call as they came back, and bring them both home to dinner. And, as the young Colvilles, from "The Bury," were also reading with Peter, during the holidays, perhaps they would come, too, and they could get up a game at cricket together in the meadow.

The young Colvilles were Harrow boys, and generally, during the vacations, went and read for an hour or two with Peter daily. And now he was glad of it for Warren's sake, that he might have a chance of watching him with lads of his own class, though somewhat his seniors in age, and seeing how their conversation and example affected him, and whether he had judged wrong in keeping him at home, and not sending him, as Aunt Barbara advised, to Winchester?

Though Peter Borrington, in some cases, would educate a boy at home, no one knew better than Peter the honest value of our public-schools, as primary stages from which the best actors were turned out, in general, for the grand dramas of life played by the really great of their generation. He perfectly well appreciated the importance of the *mens sana in corpore sano*, in its right sense. A milksop got no milk from him; a mother's darling shirked him like his

grammar ; a bully quailed under his glance ; no boy, to look at Peter Borrington, once hear him open his mouth, or go a walk with him across-country, would have dreamed of running to him, blubbering with his thumb to his eye, or sneaking, or tale-telling, or snivelling for a holiday. And, as for a lie, for deceit, or duplicity in any shape, or gross selfishness in any one of its hundred forms—let him try it for once, and good-bye to his hold on Peter.

Peter Borrington had educated for college more boys than Warren Woodford, and they had turned out MEN at all points. Yes, and over and above taking “ first classes,” some of them could run, and ride, and leap like stags, and bat and bowl with the best, and foot-ball it, too ; aye, and, come occasion, fight for their rights like genuine turkey-cocks ; yes, and, regardless of SELF, stand up for what was fair and just, and, game to the last, stick to it, too, as any, the best

fellows of Eton or Harrow. And please to show him any others who were doing better?"

"Warren a milksop, either? He, Peter, listen to his mother about the flannels? Yes, this was how he would listen:—after lessons, hot, or cold, off he was with him down to the river; and if Warren couldn't dive like a duck and swim like a cork before he was twelve years old, the fault should not be Peter Borrington's."

And couldn't Peter handle a bat and ball himself, and didn't he love it? Wasn't he in with the Winchester eleven once that thrashed all Hampshire? And, if it were clerical, would any fair cross-shot escape him? Who had taught Warren and the young Buryites all they knew of the gun and rod but he? Yes, and, times past—but mustn't for the world mention it to Aunt Barbara—who could take a fence, and be up with the hounds in pluckier style than Peter?

Now, those days were past for Peter, past for ever. But they had helped to form the man, such as he was. And, though there were now far other fences before him to breast and surmount, yet the recalling of those days to memory had its value—for he felt they gave him his chief glory in the present—they had taught him to know himself, and to face boldly and fearlessly—truth carrying him through and over all—the roughs as well as the smooths—to cheerfully plod on through the stony grounds, as well as cheerily canter over the swards.

And, so, humbly rejoicing on his way, “what was to hinder him making a man of Warren, too, if his mother liked it, after the same mould?”

“Nothing, that I can see,” said Lucretia—“as soon as he has regularly taken to his flannel waistcoats.”

“Nor I, either, if it must be so,” fell in Aunt Barbara—“only have done, for pity’s

sake, in all weathers, with those dreadful dangerous bathings !”

But the flannels lay by, and the bathings went on—and, spite of all, up grew Warren like heart of oak.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME OF PETER BORRINGTON'S IDEA OF "THE RIGHT STUFF"

Our story does not purpose to follow Warren's upward progress, step by step, under Peter Borrington. It would be but to relate a too oft-told tale, to have any particular interest for present readers. Still, the number of his admirers are not few, who delight to look proudly back on those pleasant Rexbury days, and trace to them the source and fountain of those best triumphs of his, which have won for him not only his present well-earned renown, but also his sweet peace and joy. And not

by good luck, or favour, or affection won them, but by his own right pith and purpose, by self-reliance without selfishness, based on sound principles of wisdom-seeking in all things rather than mere knowledge, whereby the root yields its fruit by which the good tree is timely known.

The reader sees him now, therefore, grown from a boy into a fine, handsome, upright lad, verging close on the young man, and as brave, and gentle, and generous a one as any England had to shew.

The *Sibi Quisque* motto—the Every Man For Himself, Peter had seen work wonders; but he had also known it the artificer of a great deal of meanness and mischief, of mere brag as well as bravery. There was an instance of it just then under his own eye—Hector thanked Hector for everything.

When Lucretia first heard that the young Colville's, from "The Bury," were coming to read with Peter Borrington during the vacation, she turned pale as a

corpse, and caught Aunt Barbara's arm for support. But, after an hour's closetting with Peter and dear Aunty together, she walked forth again, though still with a pensive look, smiling as one who had gained a conquest over herself, and was happier for it.

What had she to turn cold and pale about?

The Colville's were distant relations of the Marquis of Hardencore, by the mother's side. "The Bury" was his property, together with all the farm-lands thereunto appertaining.

"What then?" said Peter. "The boys can't help their kinsman's sins. Very likely have never set eyes on him three times in their lives. How often does he come down here? Not once in five years. Let that trouble you? On the contrary—Warren will be the gainer. Just what we want. Let's see what a little note-comparing between them will do."

" Prove what I have fought for a hundred times," agreed Aunt Barbaa.

" What's that ?"

" It is emulation he wants most."

" Let's see. Yes, that's true—they do want a couple more for their cricket-club—good thought. The Harrovians are splendid fellows at that !"

Lucretia cheered up—and the cricket-club went splendidly on !

Peter Borrington judged well. It *was* just what they wanted—the test to prove the strength that was in him—the strength given him, yet undeveloped, for works of a tentative spirit, not of vanity and vain glory. As yet not even the mother knew her own son.

Sibi Quisque was the Colville motto.

" Harrow," they said, " had taught it them."

" Oh indeed !" cried Peter, " plucky that ! And Christian spirit—what ?"

" Now, we'll show you !" cried Hector.

Ye Gods ! well might Lucretia open her eyes with wonder—such feats of strength and daring ! sometimes they literally made her shudder. “ Warren would break his neck, that was certain.”

Peter laughed.

Aunty clapped her hands, when, after Warren had touched the cord with his toe, Hector Colville cleared it, and an inch to spare.

“ Put it up three inches higher,” cried Hector.

Poor Lucretia’s heart beat double ; Peter looking on laughing the while in the most cruel manner ; and Aunty offering “ fifty to one on Hector Colville.”

Oh dear ! it was now time for Peter to look grave ;—for down came Hector, sprawling on all fours ; and then over went Warren, as easy as a stag.

There was a mischievous twinkle in Peter’s eye all the day afterwards, which Aunty did not at all approve of.

he said, "Leave her alone—coax her kindly a bit, and she'll go on well enough."

But thwack—thwack—thwack—faster and more furiously than before, went the stick; notwithstanding which the donkey, fixing her hind legs firmer, would not move an inch.

"Shouldn't I like to punch your head?" cried Hector.

"Maybe, if you could;"—and thwack—thwack—thwack, shewed, at any rate, that swarthy-skin hadn't much fear about it.

"Do it again, and, by George! you shall see," said Hector.

Thwack—thwack—thwack—thwack.

"You young villian!"—and now all Harrow ought to have been there.

Down went the rope, and the stick—and up went the cuffs:—"Like to punch my head, would you?—do it then," growled young Romany, sparring up to his gentleman.

"Confound you, be off!" said Hector, retreating a step or two, "or, by Jove! I'll smash you."

"Smash away, little brick," laughed Hazeleyes. "No—you won't—won't soil your pretty hands—no—I thought not;" and, slipping up to Warren—"Will the other little gentleman like to take a turn, while Nelly picks a mouthful?"

"Yes, immensely!" answered Warren; and, throwing off his coat—at it they went like two young lions, or, rather, like lion and tiger, as if for life and death, without a moment's more parley.

Out spurted the blood from Warren's nose, all over his shirt and trousers.

Stung far more with the affront to his pride, than by the blow, then felt Warren the man rise up within him. In he rushed—and, planting it well, down went the foe, floored clean as Hector himself could have done it.

Then a moment, to take breath—then, at it again—oh, mercy on us!—lucky poor Lucretia did not see it!

Ah ! that was a coward hit—and Warren bent under it for a moment.

“ Confound it !” cried Hector—“ the young miscreant—the dastardly dog to do that—pitch into him—that’s right—smash him !”

“ Look out, then,” growled Hazeleyes.

“ Look out,” echoed Warren ; and, measuring his man with his eye—over he went, floored flat as a flounder.

“ Bravo, bravo !” cried Hector ; “ by Jupiter ! that was a stunner !”

Not a bit of it. Up again, fresh as ever—oh, mercy, mercy !—if Lucretia had seen that !

Another half minute for breath.

“ Now then,”—and, resolved to bring it to a close, Warren threw out right and left—Romany reeled—staggered as if he were drunk—and, falling forwards, toppled over flat on his face.

“ Have any more ?” asked Warren.

“ No ;”—and, getting on his legs again,

off limped the gipsy to his donkey, muttering curses at her as he went.

"You won't beat her so again, will you," asked Warren.

"Not till next time;" and, looking up, sidelong—"You're a good 'un," he muttered, "but 'tother's a muff—and now Nelly shake hands and make it up, old girl;"—and, catching at the rope, Nelly grinned again, with new pleasure, till she shewed all her great white teeth; and, then, leaping on her back, off she cantered to the tent, pleased enough to be such good friends once more.

"Plucky that as ever I saw," laughed Hector. "By George! I should have liked some of our fellows to have seen that. Only wish you'd have left him to me—I'd have polished him off! Why the deuce didn't you let *me* tackle him?"

Warren thought he knew why, but he never said anything to Peter about it, nor did Hector either; except that "they had had

a bit of a skirmish with a gipsy at Hill-copse, and Warren was such a peppery chap, when his blood was up, there was no holding him. A pity he didn't come and take a few lessons of them at Harrow."

Oh, the rueful faces that day and for many after it at "The Briers!"

Peter's was the only one, besides Warren's, that wore a smile.

"There!" said he to Aunty, "are you not proud of him now?"

"What, with that swollen nose and black eye?"

"Beautiful!—see you anything to equal it in Hector?"

"Well, it's none of your doing, that's lucky," said Aunty, shrugging her shoulders. "Handsome or ugly, that came, I presume, from his father?"

At this Warren sidled up to his mother, as a sigh escaped her; and, pressing his lips to her cheek, promised, her with a look that she well understood, what was of far

more comfort to her just then than all Peter's heroics—"that she need not fear for him, he felt as well as he ever did in his life, and hated quarrelling and fighting as much as she did."

But it was a long time before the blood-stained shirt-front and trousers left Lucretia's eyes; though, once close questioned by Peter, she owned, "that she never would have believed she could have borne the sight of blood of child of hers with such calmness and composure. It certainly showed a bold spirit."

"Spirit?—yes, you shall see that some day," returned Peter, kindling at the thought; "and of the right sort, too. Not provoking to anger—any bully and braggadocio can do that—but seeking rather to prevent it; slow to wrath, but ready and able, if need be, not only to assert the just cause, but to maintain it."

"And, withal, self-reliant?"

"Yes, have patience, self-reliance of the

right sort, also—self-reliance without selfishness. Fight your own battles? unquestionably. Put out your own strength? of course; but *sibi quisque*, every man for himself, master Hector, what meant that often?—Stand aside—don't you see *I* am coming?—make way—can't you see *I* am in a hurry, *I* must not be hindered? Keep moving too; what signified that sometimes?—Mind, *I* am behind—take care—*my* toes must not be trodden on. And give me a lift, will you—how about that?—See you hanged first—go, and help yourself—don't bother *me*—get out of *my* way, or go to the devil—*Sibi quisque*, don't you hear?—every man for himself—and God for—ah! who can know that, master Hector?”

“And, pray, why, if *I* am in a hurry, are my precious toes to be trodden on” wanted Aunt Barbara to be told.

“By no means! Step out as fast as you please, take all the room you want, in reason—only don't get in other people's way, if

they don't get in yours. Best keep out of the crowd if your toes are so tender. People can't be all thinking for you."

"Rubbish! Sent him to Winchester when I told you, you'd have made a man of him. Now look! mercy on us! black eyes and bloody noses anything to go by? Time, pretty near, he began to think of getting out in the world—and there's a figure!

"Yes, isn't he? Some of the right stuff there, if you like—I agree with you."

Shortly after this, Peter entered Lucretia's work-room unexpectedly one afternoon. He brought her a copy of Greek verses to look at, of Warren's, which he had taken him up that morning, and quite astonished him with."

Unfortunately Lucretia could not read them, so must be indebted to Peter for a literal translation.

"That would spoil them. To be relished as they ought to be, they must be read in

the original. What a pity! Would you like to learn Greek?"

"We'll talk about it, when I have packed off my drawings," smiled Lucretia, pulling off the cloth from before them.

Then, without acting, Peter might have started, and, falling back astounded, had no words at command to express his surprise and admiration! But no—there he stood before the easel, without any more visible emotion, beyond a pleased smile all over his face, than if he had been called by Aunt Barbara to give her his opinion of a fresh importation from Hanway Yard, or Madame Jupon's. At length finding his tongue:—

"I think," said he, "you have made that dun-cow's face too white, next the black one, don't you?"—

Lucretia doubled her hand, and looked through it.

"It comes out too much—like a spot in the picture."

"That's true—it does," agreed Lucretia,

after a minute's scrutiny ; and, taking a brush, she sat down, and ; bidding Peter, " just amuse himself for a little by looking again at the verses," in less than five minutes. " Now, will that do, do you think ?" she asked.

" Admirably !"

" Anything else atrocious, that you see ?"

" Nothing. No. Touch it again at your peril !"

" Nothing else—sure ?"

" By the bye—yes—one thing—and that's all."

" Ah ! Lucretia Woodford in the corner,—what an oversight !"

" Yes ; and there, in the other, that picturesque little word *soLD*, to balance it ; *then* I'll give you *my* opinion.

When Auntie heard she had altered the dun-cow's face, to please Peter, she was finely up about it.

" What did *he* know of the arts ? A spot

in the picture indeed ! and the very image of her Colly ! It was spite, because she had not taken his Molly. They were packed up, and off, or"——

"You would do nothing of the sort," smiled Peter ; "Look there—find a wrong spot in *that* if you can."

It was a rural piece, about the size of a large slate, that Peter pointed to, the production of Aunty's own talent before she was sixteen, and which did her "infinite credit," every one said, considering she never had a lesson, and painted it quite from fancy.

"Find a wrong spot any where in *that* if you could."

That was true, so, Peter conquered ; Suffolk Street duly acknowledged its obligation ; and, setting to work on something else, Lucretia soon got so engaged and interested in the future, that she had time to think but very little of the past.

But now it was necessary that she should

include in her serious thoughts for the future another "little pressing matter," as Auntie called it—and that was, what was to be done with Warren?

Peter talked it over first with Aunt Barbara; and then, obtaining leave, went up, and put it point blank to his mother:—
"What do you mean to do with him?"

"That is just what has kept me awake half the night for months past," answered Lucretia, drawing her chair round for a long talk.

"Why not come to some decision then, and keep awake no longer?"

"I have thought of twenty things."

"Best think of only one."

"I wish I could, and be sure of it."

"That you may, without doubt."

"How?"

"Think of the one only that he only thinks of himself."

"Do you really advise that?"

"Why not?"

"What—make him a Civil Engineer?"

"Yes. Make him a Civil Engineer. Make him what he most wishes to be made himself. Make him, God willing, the great man he feels already he could, and should be, I daresay, if you would let him."

"And is that what you would do?"

"Undoubtedly. Hark!"

"Ah! that everlasting lathe and vice! Directly he gets home, there he is again—we can hardly make him take time now to eat a meal with us."

"Yet how well and stout he looks!"

"A bit pale and pulled of late I thought. Ratcliffe says he must not shut himself up so long, but take more air and exercise. I wish you would talk to him about it?"

"This very day."

"His whole heart and soul seem in it, don't they?"

"Entirely."

"The model suspension-bridge—curious that, isn't it?"

"Very. But mere moonshine to what he calls, his Wholesome Water Works, to supply all London—that is really a grand idea!"

"Merits a patent," dear Aunt says.

"Did she say so?"

"Only yesterday."

"Good! Then I'll have at her, sure as fate, before I eat another dinner. Where is she now do you think?"

"Let's see—three o'clock—out among her flowers, I'll warrant. She wants to make him a soldier."

"Commander-in-Chief, I'll be bound for it, if she could, before he had cut his wise teeth. We'll see about that. How much would a cornetcy cost?"

"About £650, would it not?"

"H—m—ah—eh—yes—true—so it would—and, taking up his hat, off went Peter in search of Aunt Barbara.

"Can you spare me, poor Peter, ten minutes again?"

"Patience till I've given these roses a

little more mould, and then twenty, may be."

"That moss is a beauty!"

"Isn't it? There's a bud, then, for your button-hole."

"It's the sweetest of all flowers, to my mind."

"For scent, not so sweet as the cabbage-rose."

"It's the emblem, don't they say, of superior merit?"

"What, the moss-bud? No, the full-blown—you mistake."

"What of the bud, then?"

"There — that will do—now I'm your obedient servant—what is it?"

"Mrs. Woodford quite agrees, that it's time Warren decided on something."

"No doubt about it. And, pray, what's that to be?"

"Not a soldier."

"Dear, dear! what matters it to me? Do as you like with him. You haven't said

what you thought of the two cucumbers I sent you this morning. Do you know what you'd have given for their equals in Covent Garden market?"

"No two such to be got there for love or money."

"Not a soldier? Well, so be it; and what then?"

"You have seen the Suspension Bridge?"

"Well."

"Curious, isn't it?"

"I am no judge."

"And the Wholesome Water Works?"

"Yes."

"A clever idea that."

"He is an ingenious lad certainly."

"From such simple beginnings come our wonders of the world."

"Oh? your mechanic-wonders, do you mean?"

"Many die Lieutenant Colonels, who have never been in action."

"Possibly. They are Lieutenant Colonels nevertheless."

"Zounds—mighty glory in that, isn't there?"

"A gentleman's a gentleman."

"An honest, and a useful, man is the noblest work of God!"

"What says his mother about it?"

"What says her heart? It only wishes it had the means."

"Oh—come to that, is it? means? Yes, indeed, where are *they* to come from?"

"A cornetcy would cost—how much—about six hundred and fifty pounds, would it not?"

"Thereabouts."

"Somewhat less would put him with a first-class engineer. True, he might, that's certain, die a Lieutenant Colonel, if he lived as long, and never hardly have smelt gunpowder."

"And, making bridges and water-works?"

"Be a baronet, who knows, one of these fine days, with ten thousand a-year to support it."

"A mechanic? Oh my patience! And wear an apron? Is his mother going out of her senses?"

"Ah, here she is! Let us see," said Peter, as Lucretia came smiling to meet them; "she don't look very bad, does she?"

The candles were burning low in their sockets that night, when Lucretia, feeling happier than she had done for many a long day, kissed dear Aunty's cheeks, and wished her "sweet dreams." A weight had gone from her breast; for, though it still remained a question, how that indenture fee of six hundred pounds was to be managed, she had so far gained over Aunty that she offered no insurmountable opposition to their scheme; and, thus far on her road to the bright goal in view, she committed the rest to Him, to whom night and morning she confided every secret of her soul; and,

laying her head on her pillow, slept like those about whose beds Angels delight to watch and keep safe guard.

As for Peter, little of sleep was it that he got; but whether it was what Lucretia had whispered to him about the meaning of that moss-bud, as he shook hands; or the thought, as to what was best to be done about the six hundred pounds, that kept his eyes wide-open, till, falling off as the dawn peeped through his curtains, he managed to get a couple of hour's doze before Dinah came to call him as the clocks struck seven—is impossible to determine.

Aunt Barbara fared little better; for, “do what she would”—shut her eyes tight—close her ears up with her night cap—count a hundred five times backwards:—there, all the same, was Peter, dancing before her all night in regimentals, and flourishing a great broadsword over her head, and crying, “there, there’s some of the right stuff for you—heart of oak that!”—

while Warren, beating a drum to the tune of "See The Conquering Hero Comes," in a large leather apron, kept up such a din, that "her poor head," she said, "was distracted so, she really thought she was going crazy."

END OF VOL. I.

